

INTIMATE HEALING EXPERIENCED THROUGH
THE RECEPTION OF THE EUCHARIST
IN A CONGREGATION

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this project is to determine if there is a correlation between receiving the Eucharist and healing. This phenomenological qualitative research project implemented at Church of the Reconciler in Fairfield, Alabama employed four data collection methods, incorporating interviews at the beginning and end of the project, pre and post questionnaires, observation, and daily assessment profiles cojoined with daily journal entries from the participants, who received the Eucharist over a three-week period. The project confirmed that participants who consistently received the Eucharist experienced some measure of healing and insight that has impacted their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first of all wish to acknowledge with tremendous gratitude the entire COTR family for being so open to allowing this study to happen in their midst over the past three years amidst so much upheaval we have all had to contend with.

I would like to thank all those who agreed to participate in this study. Their willingness to come along side me in this is appreciated more than they know. Without them, this study could never have unfolded.

I would also like to acknowledge Gary and Elise Ohlman for their input and expertise in the formulation of questions and graphs that were instrumental in the data gathering process.

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numerous occasions. And for the many others who have held this project and me up in prayer: thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Lastly, I would like to thank my peer associate, Elizabeth Heft. Her editorial skills and help in formatting the paper, finalizing the data with all the figures and charts would have been impossible without her.

This has been a collective effort, truly a family affair. I am humbled by all of you, and I love you.

DEDICATION

To the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, who has loved us, saved us, then, now, and forever. May this project be pleasing to You, Lord Jesus, and bring you and the Most Holy Trinity honor and glory.

To Stacy, my amazing, heroic, and gallant wife who has spent countless hours editing and improving this paper with such incredible wisdom and candor. Thank you for taking this journey with me. I could not have done this without you. Thank you for always being there, no matter what. You are the love of my life.

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ABBREVIATIONS

COTR	Church of the Reconciler
ICCEC	International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NASB	New American Study Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
OSB	Orthodox Study Bible

Sight, touch, and taste in Thee are each deceived;
the ear alone most safely believed:
I believe all the Son of God has spoken
than Truth's own word there is no truer spoken.

—St. Thomas Aquinas, *Adoro Te Devote*

INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus Christ's story is an amazing story. It is the story of our mighty Lord and Savior coming to redeem us by pouring out his life for ours; it is the story of our king coming from his mighty throne to rescue us. His passionate love for us leaves us spell bound, disbelieving for joy. He extends a scandalous invitation to receive him just as we are. Accepting this invitation changes everything. We become a new creation in him. This is the reality of the Paschal Mystery displayed in every Eucharistic celebration: where bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, who is the Incarnate Word that reveals the Father's heart to us through the Holy Spirit. This story of Christ in the Eucharist is the focus of the following six chapters.

Chapter one, entitled Ministry Focus, sets the tone for my project by examining how my context and spiritual journey serve as the framework. My context, affectionately referred to by many of the parishioners as 'the little church on the corner', contains the people my wife and I have had the singular privilege of fellowshipping with. The renovated bank doesn't look like much; the old building with a lot of wrinkles and blemishes doesn't stand out. But inside this building, which resides in a low-income, impoverished, multi-racial urban area, the Real Presence of Christ is celebrated in the Eucharist nearly every day. In this chapter, I explain convergence, regarding the International Communion of Charismatic Episcopal Churches and how this accentuates

the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist evangelically, charismatically, and sacramentally.

Chapter two lays out the biblical foundation of my project and explores Luke 22:14-20. Jesus said in Luke 22:15, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” I explain how Jesus changed the script of the Passover and why it would never be the same. I will show that the Passover, the Last Supper which is the New Covenant in his blood¹, became the key for understanding the Crucifixion and the Resurrection and reinstated the sacrum convivium.² The story of the Eucharist is a story we are invited to fully partake in. It is the incarnational reality of Christ bearing our humanity in his humanity and transforming it by his divinity. It seems impossible, incredulous. But what if it’s true?

Chapter three overviews the life of Catherine of Siena and will set the historical foundation for the project. Catherine of Siena is relatable to most everyone who sits in the pews. In the world’s eyes she was simple and ordinary; she wasn’t anyone of great notoriety. She lived at a time of great upheaval due to the Black Death, 100 Years War, political and church disarray, and scandals. Much wisdom can be gleaned from her life because we, too, live in a time of great upheaval. In this chapter we explore how she fell madly in love with the Lord, what resulted from her mystical encounter with the Lord after receiving the Eucharist, and her illustrations that explain what happens during the Eucharist, bringing healing and strength to the one who comes to the table desiring.

¹ Jeremiah 31:31; Isaiah 53:10-11; Luke 22:14-20. NKJV

² The sacrum convivium means sacred banquet. Isaiah 25:6-7; Revelation 19:7-9. NKJV

Catherine was ablaze with the Eucharist. It deepened her true identity in-Christ. It can deepen ours as well. Catherine and the power of her testimony lead us into chapter four.

The foundation set out in chapter four is the Theology of the Eucharist. Given the demographic mix of my parish, it is important that everyone know some rudimentary theological concepts and understand that each of them, as participants, has developed a world view with a theological outlook. Thus, we all need to be on the same page and not talking past one another.

The academic rigor needed for postulating a lucid apologetic for the efficacy and veracity of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a daunting task given the extensive scholarly theological material available from both contemporary and historical sources, not to mention the controversies surrounding this sacramental reality. It is vital to establish the fact that the Eucharist is central to Church polity and must not be marginalized. It is imperative to demonstrate how Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist has always existed, but people didn't feel the need to define it until people began to question it. The need for clear and concise teaching on the theology of the Eucharist is as necessary now as it has been in the past. This chapter begins to answer the what and the why of Eucharistic belief and will set the stage for chapter five on neuroplasticity.

The interdisciplinary concept of neuroplasticity is described in chapter five. This chapter highlights the importance of the teaching and learning process integral to this project, which begins the flow from theology to praxis and builds upon the foundations established by the theology of the Eucharist. This chapter delves into patterns of thinking, toxic and healthy, and lays out the impact our thoughts have on us. We are reminded that for Christians, having a renewed mind in Christ is a "no-brainer"; what we think and

believe are joined at the hip. We explore how our brains are sculpted by our minds and the results of thinking carefully, thinking well, and thinking intentionally. We look at the process of healing: how it can be maintained and how it not only changes our present malady but can impact the vicissitudes of our lives. This revelation puts in motion a plan and trajectory for living in-Christ. It is palatable. By intentionally cultivating Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist as the Mighty Healer, this project was to discover how and what happened as a result. From here we move into the final chapter.

Chapter six encapsulates and summarizes the findings of the project. It includes the methodology, ways used to implement it, participant information, and means used to collect, triangulate, and analyze the data. This chapter shows how each participant experienced the Eucharist over a three-week period. It concludes with a summary of insights and perspectives gleaned through the process and addresses what changes would need to be implemented for future projects such as this. One final note is that in the implementation section, I include a summary of the teachings given before the project began. This proved to be pivotal for many of the participants; they were able to discover, amidst the data provided, a pattern of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist.

I hypothesized that if individuals receive the Eucharist on a regular basis over a three-week period within the context of the daily and Sunday liturgical celebrations, they will then experience healing. This healing would entail a measurable change in the physical and emotional well-being of the person, which will be analyzed either through a medical diagnosis or a person's testimony of a recognizable relief. This study looks at the correlation between the frequency of communion and healing.

The rubric for this final paper is, therefore, to discuss and synthesize how the six chapters undergirded, strengthened, and impacted the Doctor of Ministry project by providing the schema, hypothesis, and solution for what happened as this project was implemented. So, let's begin.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Developing the Synergy, of Greek origin, is defined as a “joint work of a combined or cooperative action or force.”¹ Converge means “to come together at a point,” and convergence means the act or fact or condition of converging.² I will now focus on where my ministry experience and context converge. The ICCEC is a convergence movement. It is unique. There is no other church like it in Fairfield or in the surrounding area.

The ICCEC is an expression of the church that is fully sacramental-liturgical, evangelical, and charismatic. These characteristics can be illustrated as three streams that converge together in total unity with no one stream being preeminent over the others.

The ICCEC is a relatively young communion with seeds of the “convergence of streams” (liturgical/sacramental, evangelical, and charismatic) beginning in May of 1977. That is when a group of evangelical leaders came together and called on evangelicals to rediscover their roots in historic Christianity. This was known as the “Chicago Call.”³

¹ Michael Agnes, *Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fifth Edition* (Boston, MA: Webster's New World, 2018), 1452.

² Agnes, *Webster's*, 318.

On June 26, 1992, Father Randolph Adler was consecrated as the ICCEC's first Bishop and Primate. The founding vision of the ICCEC states: "We seek to bring the rich sacramental and liturgical life of the early church to searching evangelicals and charismatics as well as carrying the power of Pentecost to our brothers and sisters in the historic churches, all the while providing a home for all Christians who seek an expression of faith that is equally liturgical/sacramental, evangelical, and charismatic."

Uniquely, the ICCEC is not a schism or splinter group from another denomination. The ICCEC is not affiliated with Episcopal Church USA, nor a breakoff of that denomination. It is a unique work of God borne into the hearts of clergy from numerous denominations who studied, prayed over, and witnessed this need for a house of convergence.

The ICCEC is submitted to the authority of Scripture as it has been interpreted by the continuing witness of the ancient church, is governed by consensus and is committed to the preaching of the Gospel to fulfill the great commission. The ICCEC believes that one is saved by grace alone and justified by faith in Christ who calls everyone to a personal relationship with Him.

³ The seeds of convergence were planted in May of 1977, when a group of evangelical leaders came together to issue a powerful call to all evangelicals to rediscover their roots of historic Christianity. It was signed by such people as Peter Gilquist, Thomas Howard, Robert Webber and Jon Braun. Their message – a recovery of Christianity’s common and apostolic roots for the faithful transmission of the Gospel became the. Catalyst and heartbeat for the ICCEC. This is also referenced in Robert Webber’s book, *Ancient Future Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), 26. “The phenomenon of the return to classical Christianity has also touched the evangelical world. In 1977 a group of forty young evangelical leaders gathered outside Chicago to hammer out *The Chicago Call*. This call urged evangelical churches to turn away from an ahistorical Christianity to recover new and enriching insights from the early church. The current climate of rapport between evangelicals and Catholics was heightened by the 1994 publication of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. The conflict this document engendered is forcing us to look behind the Reformation to see our mutual commitment to classical Christianity. As Charles Colson has written: “[We] must engage the culture with the truth of God’s Word and the power of the gospel. To do so, we must re-center ourselves on the key doctrines of historic Christianity.”

The ICCEC is fully charismatic, believing that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit all believers are empowered to participate in the fullness of ministry. The baptism of the Holy Spirit releases in the believer both the fruit and gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the church and the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

The ICCEC is governed by bishops in apostolic succession who are submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to each other. Decisions are made in council upon coming to consensus. The church is administered by the orders of bishops, priests, deacons, and laity. All baptized Christians are ministers of the church.

Worship in the ICCEC is biblical, liturgical, and Spirit-filled. At the center of worship is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. We believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁴

The ICCEC also celebrates the living historic forms of the liturgies of the church and the seven sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Confession, Healing, Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony.⁵

The ICCEC is a tangible reality of convergence. It can be said, therefore, that the ICCEC is 100% evangelical, 100% liturgical/sacramental and 100% charismatic. In the

⁴ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1993), 274-283. The ICCEC is in line with the Orthodox position when referring to the real presence: “The chief place in Christian worship belongs to other sacraments, or as they are called in Greek, the mysteries. ‘It is called a mystery,’ writes St. John Chrysostom of the Eucharist, because what we believe is not what we see, but we see one thing and believe another... When I hear the Body of Christ mentioned, I understand what is said in one sense, the unbeliever in another... This double character, at once outward and inward, is the distinctive feature of a sacrament: the sacraments, like the Church, are both visible and invisible; in every sacrament there is the combination of an outward visible sign with an inward invisible grace.” “As the words of the Epiclesis (the invocation or calling down of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts) makes abundantly plain, the Orthodox Church believes that after the consecration of bread and wine they become in very truth the Body and Blood of Christ: they are not mere symbols, but the reality. But while Orthodoxy has always insisted on the reality of the change, it has never attempted to explain the manner of the change.”

⁵ <https://www.iccec.org/about-us/> This is the website for the International Communion of Charismatic Churches. The acronym is ICCEC.

Spiritual Autobiography, I traced how I came to join the ICCEC. I shared my ecclesiology of what I believed the church was to be: persons coming to church carrying their Bibles believing it to be the inspired, infallible, and inerrant word of God (evangelical); believing that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharist (liturgical/sacramental); and open to the full operation and manifestations of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit (charismatic). I was believing for convergence long before discovering that others were as well.

While writing my Spiritual Autobiography, I traced my personal trajectory of convergence by recalling my Baptist upbringing: receiving Jesus into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior at a crusade and soon after being baptized - the evangelical stream; being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as well as moving in other gifts of the Holy Spirit - the charismatic stream; and being ordained as a priest in the Roman Catholic church - the liturgical/sacramental stream.

My spiritual journey, educational training, and professional development as a college student, seminarian and priest the last forty years has been living and breathing convergence as an evangelical, liturgical/sacramental, charismatic Christian. My life has been synergistic.

The Sunday worship service at COTR is also convergent. The service begins with a procession that includes a thurifer (who carries the thurible containing burning charcoal and the incense boat), processional cross (a portable crucifix mounted on a staff which is used solely in liturgical processions), acolytes (who assist at the altar and in the processional by carrying lighted candles), gospel bearer, deacons, con-celebrating priests and the main celebrant (who is the main officiate of the liturgy). They have all donned

the appropriate apparel and vestments for the occasion. The celebrant wears an alb, cincture, chasuble, stole and cross. An entrance song is sung during the processional and as the members of the procession approach the altar, the altar is reverenced. The altar is the main focus in the sanctuary with the pulpit and lectern positioned on either side of it. The entrance processional (which symbolizes the journey of the church into the presence of God) is one of five that occur during the celebration of liturgy: entrance processional, gospel processional, offertory processional, communion, recessional.⁶ At the end of the entrance processional, incense is used targeting four specific areas: the gifts and altar, the gospel and lectionary, the celebrant, and the congregation. Christ's real presence resides: (1) in the gifts of bread and wine (the Eucharist), (2) in His word, (3) in the celebrant as *persona Christi*, and (4) in the congregation as temples of the Holy Spirit and arks of the covenant – a chosen race, a royal priesthood, the holy people of God. The liturgy continues with the Introductory Rite, that among other things, includes a corporate confession of sin and absolution, singing of the Kyrie and Gloria, and then a continuation of vibrant praise and worship unto God (including singing in tongues) with the congregation's full involvement. At the end of this there is time taken to move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophetic, words of knowledge, wisdom, speaking and interpreting tongues (for the congregation and specific individuals). The opening Collect concludes the Introductory Rite of the Liturgy. Now begins the Liturgy of the Word with Bible readings taken from the Old Testament, Psalter, Epistles and Gospel. The sermon follows. The Liturgy of the Word is concluded with the Sign of Peace (it has a relationship to the

⁶ Thomas Howard and Howard Thomas, *The Liturgy Explained* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1981), 9.

Lord's Prayer, particularly the final petition of forgiveness, being reconciled with a brother or sister before bringing your gifts to the altar, establishes an intimate link with the Eucharist.) The Liturgy continues with the Offertory, Eucharistic canon, singing of the Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and everyone coming up to receive communion. During this time, there are several teams who move in word gifts, and healing gifts of the Holy Spirit (usually three teams of two or more persons) positioned at specific places in the nave to pray with people individually. The Liturgy is concluded with the Recessional.⁷

In *Studying Congregations*, the author writes: "One of the most important things to notice about any ritual is that it involves all the senses."⁸ Sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch, are all engaged as one comes through the doors at COTR. Rembrandt's Prodigal Son, Icons, The Sacred Heart of Jesus (for the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Orthodox Jesus Prayer devotionals) and Stations of the Cross (in commemoration of the Via Dolorosa) are seen hanging on the walls in the Narthex, Nave, and Sanctuary, while the vigil candle, Tabernacle and Eternal Flame are visible reminders of our Lord's presence. Fragrant incense fills the sanctuary burning in the censer, music is intricately woven throughout the service, and sanctuary bells can be heard throughout the Eucharistic canon during the Sanctus, Epiclesis, Institution Narrative and Final Doxology.

⁷ <https://www.iccec.org/about-us/>

⁸ Nancy Ammerman et al., eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 85.

Taste and touch are engaged as communion is received as the priesthood of all believers enters a time of most holy union.⁹

Again, in *Studying Congregations*, “Congregations create their culture, in large part, through the things they do together.”¹⁰ Through the daily liturgy, the congregation of COTR is creating a culture that is convergent.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist will form the basis for my Doctor of Ministry project. It is the means for interacting with the residents of the city of Fairfield and parishioners of COTR daily. The Liturgy of the Eucharist has been experienced repeatedly throughout the centuries as a source of healing and deliverance. The value of exploring the scriptural historical, and theological basis for the Eucharist as a source of healing and deliverance would be a valuable Doctor of Ministry project. This project needs to be narrow, focused, and measurable.

In the Eucharistic canon, there are several prayers that highlight the healing properties contained within the mystery and sublime reality of the Eucharist. Let me give two examples. The first one comes from the Institution Narrative where the Celebrant says the following:

“When supper was ended, He (Jesus) took the cup. Again, He gave You (Father) thanks and praise, and said: Drink this, all of you: This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you and for the whole world, for the forgiveness of sins, for the healing of fallen and broken humanity. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of Me.”

⁹ Austin Randolph Adler, *Making Visible the Void - Holy Water and Incense* (San Clemente, CA: Austin Adler, 1995), 10. This was a booklet that Archbishop Adler, the Patriarch of the International Communion of Charismatic Churches, wrote specifically for the clergy and laity in this denomination.

¹⁰ Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations*, 84.

And at the Fraction Rite after the singing of the Agnus Dei¹¹ prior to everyone coming forward for communion, the Celebrant, holding up the consecrated elements, the Body and Blood of Jesus, says the following: “Behold God’s love for you! Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The congregation then responds with the following proclamation: “Lord, we praise You, that in these holy gifts there is healing for body, soul and spirit.”

Let me mention one more intriguing reality about the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Presiding as the main celebrant at the Eucharistic table is the most charismatic thing that I do. At the epiclesis, I extend my hands over and touch the gifts of bread and wine and say the following: “Lord, You are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness. Let Your Holy Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is an impartation that occurs through the laying on of hands. Every charismatic knows the value, purpose, cause, and effect of the laying on of hands for healing and impartation. The Eucharist is a visible sign of invisible grace.

¹¹ Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing, 1989), 180-181. The Agnus Dei is a series of invocations in the style of a litany that is sung antiphonally by the cantor or the choir with the people during the Breaking of the Bread at the Liturgy.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Luke 22:14-20

In Luke 22:15, Jesus says to his twelve apostles, “With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” This *fervent desire* of Jesus has captured my heart, mind, and imagination for most of my adult life. What was the motivation behind His “fervent desire?” Knowing that He had only one evening left, and that He would be arrested later that night, amidst betrayal, denial, and abandonment, why was this so important to Him? Knowing He would be tried, sentenced, and crucified the next day, why was it imperative to Him that He eat this last meal with His apostles? If I knew I had only one evening left on this earth to live, what would I do and who would I do it with? Jesus chose to spend this last night with His apostles over a meal.”¹ I have a deep longing to be given more revelation about our Lord’s fervent desire in general and especially as it is expressed in this Last Supper!²

I have been a priest for over thirty-five years and during that time have celebrated the Eucharist nearly every day. The Eucharist has never grown old, mundane, or boring. I

¹ Zola Levitt, *The Miracle of Passover* (Dallas, TX: Zola Levitt Ministries, Inc., 1977), 3.

² Paul uses the same wording, i.e., “*fervent desire*,” in Philippians 1:23, in his desiring to be with Christ, “For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and with Christ which is far better...”; and, in I Thessalonians, where Paul expresses his fervent “*fervent desire*” to see the saints, “But we brethren having been taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.”

had three encounters with Christ in the Eucharist before being ordained that completely changed my understanding of Christ's Real Presence with us and in us.³ This delving into the vastness of Christ's presence with us sacramentally has been the motivation to pursue a course of study of healing encounters experienced in the Eucharist.

My Doctor of Ministry project, therefore, will be to examine and test the benefits of receiving the Eucharist over a specified period in a racially mixed congregation located in an urban, low income, inner-city cultural context. I'm believing the Eucharist is an incredible source of healing, deliverance, and transformation for individuals as well as an entire community. Luke 22:14-20 is the launching pad for studying the origins and institution of the Eucharist that will inform my Doctor of Ministry project.

Throughout this section, I will examine Luke 22:14-20 verse by verse targeting key words and phrases, considering how this passage interfaces with the other Last Supper narratives, and how it fits into the Passover which was the context and framework for the Last Supper. Lastly, I will finish by reiterating how Luke 22:14-20 will inform the Doctor of Ministry project I am proposing.

Luke 22:14-20 Jesus Institutes the Last Supper

¹⁴When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

¹⁵Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹And He took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them saying, “This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁰Likewise He also took the cup

³ I detail with these encounters extensively in my theological foundations paper.

after supper saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”

Overview of Luke 22:14-20

Luke 22:14-20 is one of four accounts of the Last Supper in the New Testament. Paul’s account in I Corinthians 11:23-26 is the oldest. This account, as a vitally important historical source, cannot be over exaggerated. It was written in 53 or 54 A.D. and is substantiated by firm archaeological evidence.⁴ This would make Paul’s account some twenty years after Christ’s crucifixion and some seven to ten years before any of the Synoptic accounts. Paul is writing to the Corinthian church about their conduct during the Eucharistic celebration; he deems their conduct deplorable. This is one of six issues he feels a pastoral need to address. However, behind the situation occurring within the Corinthian community regarding their behavior at the Eucharist, is Paul’s declaration that what he is teaching has come directly from the Lord Jesus Himself: “For what I received from the Lord that which I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread...” (I Corinthians 11:23.) This will be extremely important when examining Luke’s account of the Last Supper. Before delving into that, let me briefly comment on the dating of the other two Synoptic accounts.

The general consensus is that Paul’s account was written first. Mark 14:22-25 is next, written in or around 60 A.D., followed by Matthew 26:26-29 in 75 A.D. (Some scholars have suggested that Matthew may have been written as early as 50 A.D., but this dating has never been seen as either accurate or verifiable. It is more than probable that

⁴ Charles K. Barrett, *New Testament Background: Selected Documents: Revised and Expanded Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989), 51–52.

Matthew's account was written after the fall of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D.) Luke's account was also written around 75 A.D. (maybe as late as 80 A.D.) and as previously stated, was probably the last one written. Luke's Last Supper account is twice as long as the other three and is very similar to Paul's account; Mark and Matthew's accounts are not so similar. These points of contact between Paul and Luke will be thoroughly examined. Luke also includes information and specific details the other accounts do not have. Luke's account also has some textual issues scholars continue to debate.

Regarding the textual issues, let me give two examples, one humorous and the other one more serious. The humorous one comes from G. H. Caird written in 1963 and quoted by both Joseph Fitzmeyer and Cheslyn Jones:⁵ "The Lucan account of the Last Supper is a scholar's paradise and a beginner's nightmare."⁶ The second example, which brings some understanding to the first quote above, comes from the pen of Luke Timothy Johnson:

The account of Jesus' last meal with his disciples has had such an obvious and overwhelming importance for the Christian community – providing the foundation story for its Eucharistic celebration and much of its understanding of the meaning of the Messiah's death – that a straightforward literary analysis is difficult. The reader must let go of fascinating and in their own right important issues in order to confront the passage as part of Luke's larger story. One distracting issue is the meaning of Jesus' words for the sacramental life of the Church, a disputed question that much preoccupied the interpreters of the medieval and Reformation period alike. Another is the question concerning what sort of meal Jesus might have been sharing with the disciples, and the difference that might make for understanding his last hours. Was it a Passover meal or a fellowship meal or both? Was it celebrated on the first day of the feast (as the

⁵ Cheslyn Jones et al., eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 198.

⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985), 1386.

Synoptics have it) or the day before (as John has it)? Connected to these questions is the issue of what Jesus thought or intended by his last words and gestures at the meal.⁷

Johnson further posits that there is a shorter version to Luke's Last Supper account that some scholars have fought for, but that this position has continued to lack any credible scholarly acceptance.⁸ The longer version, where Luke includes two cups and two blessings, has "impressive external support."⁹ This "longer, or traditional text" is also supported by Bruce M. Metzger, a reputable scholar in his own right.¹⁰

Exegesis and Commentary of Luke 22:14-20

14. When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

The "hour" in this verse is reminiscent in the Gospel of John that happens throughout his narrative especially including John 13:1, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His *hour* had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end;" and in John 17:1, "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven and said: 'Father, the *hour* has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You.'" This "hour" is

⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1991), 340.

⁸ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 341.

⁹ Also, a historical reference from Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*, Vol. II (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1971), 122. Gonzales chronicles the Eucharistic Controversy during the Carolingian Renaissance as to whether or not the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the eucharist. He traces this debate, that predated the Reformation that Johnson referred to above, and concludes by summarizing: "In spite of widespread opposition, the realistic interpretation of Christ's presence in the world eventually became the most commonly held view."

¹⁰ Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament by Metzger, Bruce M. (1995) Imitation Leather* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1820), 148.

significant in John and Luke as it anticipates Jesus' mission being brought to completion. This is even more poignant given Jesus' statement in the next verse (Luke 22:15). It also looks forward to Luke 22:53 as he proclaims to those who have come to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your *hour* and the power of darkness." It also looks back to the beginning of the travel document in Luke 9:51, "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem."

"...*He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him.*" Jesus has the apostles recline with Him rather than He with them. Jesus takes the initiative, and it emphasizes the central role that He has as teacher and host.¹¹ The Passover was eaten in a reclining position with the participants lying on their sides with cushions under their arms. Robert Stein makes an interesting and humorous observation: "The famous painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo Da Vinci in which Jesus and the disciples are portrayed as sitting at a table is a beautiful sixteenth-century rendition of the event. It is not true, however, to the biblical account, in which this meal was eaten reclining."¹² It was common knowledge throughout Israel that even the poorest man during the Passover must not partake until he first reclines. Luke has other examples of meals needed to be eaten in a reclining position: 11:37; 14:10; and 17:7.

15. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer";

¹¹ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 337.

¹² Robert H. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1993), 540.

Jesus' emphatic statement in Luke 22:15, "*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,*" is not found in the other Gospels. It is unique to Luke. The Greek phrase is *epithumia epethymesa*,¹³ which literally means, "with desire I have desired."¹⁴ James Edwards explains how this phrase translates a Hebrew infinitive absolute which magnifies the statement. Edwards goes on to explain that even with the knowledge that Jesus had of the intensity of the suffering that awaited Him, that this in no way diminished His desire to be with the twelve.¹⁵ Norval Geldenhuys on Luke 22:15 conveys how Jesus was looking forward with intense anxiety to the moment when the climax of His ministry and self-surrender would be realized and His work of redemption would be accomplished.¹⁶ Walter Liefeld speaks about the intensity of Jesus' feelings as being conveyed during this Last Supper precisely because of the immense significance of what is taking place.¹⁷ Also, Donald Guthrie identifies the close connection between the Last Supper and the Jewish Passover, which Luke specifically mentions, and that Jesus, therefore, fully understood and recognized the symbolic significance of what was taking

¹³ James Strong and W. E. Vine, *Strong's Concise Concordance And Vine's Concise Dictionary Of The Bible Two Bible Reference Classics In One Handy Volume* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 90. "Epithumia" means: a desire, craving, longing, mostly of evil desires," frequently translated "lust" is used of the following, of good "desires" of the Lord's "wish" concerning the last Passover, Luke 22:15.

¹⁴ Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew And Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2010), 270.

¹⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 623.

¹⁶ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Wm B Pub Co, 1971), 553.

¹⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, D. A. Carson, and Walter W. Wessel, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary : Matthew, Mark, Luke, with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 1026.

place.¹⁸ Matthew Henry explains that Jesus knew that this Last Supper was a prologue to His sufferings, which is why He desired it, precisely because it would glorify the Father and bring about humanity's redemption.¹⁹ I agree with each of these scholar's assessments. Jesus is eager for everything to be accomplished. This last Passover was the next step in the completion of His work and "making all things new" (Revelation 21:5.)

"...Passover..." Was this meal that Jesus had a Passover? Luke Timothy Johnson raised the following: "Another is the question concerning what sort of meal Jesus might have been sharing with the disciples, and the difference that might make for understanding His last hours. Was it a Passover meal or a fellowship meal or both?" Johnson later states how he believes that Luke clearly understood the significance of this meal and that this was without a doubt occurring during the Passover.²⁰ Patrick Henry Reardon also firmly asserts that this was a Passover meal.²¹ Stein also believes that the Last Supper was associated with a Passover meal for the following reasons: 1.) The Passover had to be eaten in the walled city of Jerusalem, which it was, 2.) Jesus' disciples reclined at the Last Supper, which was required, whereas at most of all other meals persons sat; 3.) The Passover was always eaten in the evening, whereas most of all other meals were eaten in the late afternoon; 4.) The Passover ended with the singing of one or

¹⁸ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1981), 445.

¹⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1901.

²⁰ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 341.

²¹ Patrick Henry Reardon and Russell D. Moore, *The Jesus We Missed: The Surprising Truth About the Humanity of Christ* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 144.

more of the Hallel Psalms (111-117.)²² N. T. Wright posits, “It seems to me virtually certain that the meal in question was some kind of Passover meal.”²³ Joseph Fitzmeyer argues that Luke 22:15-18 is a Passover and Luke 22:19-20 is Jesus’ reinterpretation of that meal and His institution of the Lord’s Supper.²⁴ Brant Pitre concurs that Jesus kept and altered the Passover during the Last Supper.²⁵ Again, I agree with these scholar’s assessments of this Last Supper narrative occurring at the Passover.

16. “for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

“*I will no longer*” in Greek, is an emphatic future negative with the aorist subjunctive.²⁶ Jesus, in essence, is adamantly saying: *No! No! This will never happen again!* It’s like the emphatic statement in verse 15 where Jesus states how He, “fervently”, “earnestly,” “eagerly,” “desires...” This passion of Jesus must not be minimized one iota!

“*I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled,*” The natural subject is the Passover meal itself, but this verse is pointing well beyond this basic interpretation. Of all the Synoptic writers, Luke most clearly portrayed the arrival and fulfillment of God’s kingdom in Jesus’ ministry.²⁷

²² Stein, *Luke*, 545.

²³ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 555.

²⁴ Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1389.

²⁵ Brant Pitre and Scott Hahn, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York, NY: Image, 2016), 48–76.

²⁶ In classical Greek Grammar, for this verse and verse 18, the emphatic future negative is a double negative – a “no + no” – as it were, which indicates a strong future negation. The aorist subjunctive denotes past action without indicating completion, continuation, or repetition of this action.

²⁷ Stein, *Luke*, 545.

This, along with verse 18 and Paul's reminder that the Last Supper anticipates Jesus' return (I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."), exhorts believers to look both ways in the Last Supper.²⁸ This is a pivotal point in this Last Supper narrative. Prior to this Passover, the previous ones, spanning a period of 1500 years, had been celebrated within the confines of a specific framework. Jesus is about to completely change it forever by re-presenting it and re-interpreting it.

There is a rhythm that runs throughout the Scriptures: revelation, liberation, and covenant; this rhythm first began in Exodus. This *rhythm* establishes a precedent that sets in motion a consistent thread that runs throughout the Scriptures: 1.) Exodus 3:6 is the moment of revelation where God makes Himself known to Moses in the burning bush (and this will be the first of many intimate encounters the Lord will have with His servant Moses); 2.) Exodus 12 is the moment of liberation with the establishment of the Passover that connects the past, present, and future in a singular prescribed liturgical celebration: a.) i.e., the past being a specified series of plagues that systematically freed the Hebrews from their enslavement at the hands of the Egyptians and subsequent disentanglement from pagan idolatry; b.) the present having a twofold nature of being the Passover itself that delivered the Hebrew people from the angel of death, while simultaneously hovering (*brooding*) over them with divine protection because of the blood of the lamb splashed on their doors; and, c.) the future being their passing safely through the Red Sea to the shore of their promise just waiting to be fully embraced as they journey to Mt. Sinai; 3.) Exodus 19-20 with the establishment of the covenant God makes with His priestly,

²⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 624.

chosen people. The people didn't receive the covenant because they were a fallen people, though they were, but they received the covenant, which is written in marital language, so they could live in the presence of a liberating God.

The Passover is what kept those three things (revelation, liberation, and covenant) to be forever remembered in the past, embraced in the present and hoped for in the future. At the Last Supper Jesus re-presents and re-interprets the Passover, rendering it a typology, by establishing the new covenant in Himself, birthed through the finished work of the cross and resurrection. In the New Testament, Paul declares that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (I Corinthians 5:7). Christ is the new revelation, liberation, and covenant (i.e., truth, freedom, love) that happens at every Eucharist.

Lawrence Feingold connects the Passover with Calvary and the Eucharist:

We know that the Eucharist makes present the sacrifice of Calvary above all from what Christ says in all four accounts of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the sacrifice of the Temple prefigured it. Jesus makes Himself present and gives Himself to us as the Victim of a sacrifice in which the body is given and the blood poured out... Furthermore, each liturgical re-presentation of the event of the Exodus was itself a sacrifice in which the paschal lamb was offered in memory and continuity with the institutional sacrifice. The Eucharist is likewise a memorial of the event of Good Friday, on which Israel and the entire world was liberated from the dominion of sin and death. And as the event of Good Friday was itself a sacrifice – the sacrifice of all sacrifices – so is its sacramental re-presentation.²⁹

17. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves...”

²⁹ Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 106–110.

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, Luke has two blessings over a cup, one before and one after the breaking of the bread, verse 17 and verse 20 respectively. The other two Synoptics have only one blessing on the bread and cup, in that order (Mark 14:22-23; Matthew 26:26-28). Earlier, I detailed Luke Timothy Johnson's comment on the textual difficulty created by Luke's cup – bread – cup sequence. This *difficulty* can be resolved in two ways: 1.) by accepting the “longer version” of Luke’s account that has impressive external scholarly support verses the “shorter version” that has unmerited corrections, and/or inversions within the text that are unverifiable; and, 2.) that according to the most ancient discussion of the Passover meal, there are four cups of wine at the Passover, each having its own blessing, with the second one, as here in Luke, bearing the words of interpretation, “why is this night different from other nights?”

“*gave thanks*” used here and in verse 19 in Greek is *eucharisteo* and refers to the *barakah* blessing formula spoken over the elements at Jewish meals including the Passover: “Blessed are you, Lord our God, eternal King, who created the fruit of the vine.”

“*Take this and divide it among yourselves.*” A single cup was shared by the disciples and this sharing of one cup was an important sign of fellowship. This position of the sharing of one cup, however, is disputed by some scholars. This reckoning for arguing that the language is not precise enough to say that there was only cup, seems to pull it out of context. The directive of Jesus to His disciples, “*divide it among yourselves*” seems obvious enough. It is not opaque.

18. “for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God comes.”

“I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God comes.”

This is somewhat repetitive of the statement in verse 16. Once again, Jesus’ statement is unmistakably an emphatic future negative which is used with the aorist subjunctive and is exactly like verse 16: ‘*No! No! this will never happen again!*’ Once again this is a pivotal moment as Jesus is re-presenting and re-interpreting the Passover: not looking forward until the past is completed in the present moment.

“*fruit of the vine*” used here, recalls the blessing to be said over the cup at the Passover, “Blessed art thou, O Lord God, king of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine...”

“*until the kingdom of God comes*” which is different than verse 16, that has “*fulfilled in the kingdom,*” recalls another Passover blessing, “The compassionate one – may he reign for ever and ever.” It is like the Lord’s prayer in Luke 11:2, “Our Father, in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” which is a prayer for the rule and reign of God to be made perfectly manifested and totally effective in humanity. It also recalls Isaiah 9:7, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.”

19. And He took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them saying, “This is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.”

“*took*”, “*gave thanks*”, “*broke*”, and “*gave*” is a pattern that is paralleled exactly in Mark 14:22 and Matthew 26:26. This pattern is also found in this exact order in Luke

9:16, “Then He (Jesus) *took* the five loaves, and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He *blessed* and *broke* them, and *gave* them to disciples to set before the multitude.” The words, “*gave thanks*” is not found in either Mark’s or Matthew’s account. (They use the Greek word, “*eulogeo*”, which means ‘*bless*’.) The word translated “*give thanks*” in Greek is *eucharisteo*, which is the word for ‘*eucharist*.’ This is the same word Paul uses in I Corinthians 11:24. This is another example of how Luke’s account is much closer to Paul’s. And “*My body which is given for you*,” is also not found in Matthew and Mark. Luke again is like Paul: “*My body which is broken for you*”, in I Corinthians 11:24.

“...*which is given for you*” in Greek, is a present participle which expresses continuous or repeated action. This is a dynamic continual giving. It is unprecedented: Jesus is giving His body and blood to them in that moment; He will give Himself to them in His death on the cross; and continue to give Himself to them in the Eucharist, which will be fulfilled in the eschaton.

“*do this*” in Greek is a present imperative which is a command to do something in the future and involves continuous or repeated action. Jesus is not giving a suggestion! “*in remembrance of Me*,” is explicitly connected to the present imperative of “*do this*” as the defined action to be repeated.

“*remembrance*” is the word “*anamnesis*.” Luke again is like Paul in I Corinthians 11:24-25, “*do this in remembrance of Me*.” Walter Elwell has a provocative insight on this passage:

Some have argued that the absence of the words in the other Gospel records indicates that it was not the explicit intention of the Lord that what he did at the Last Supper was to be repeated as a Christian sacrament. Yet all the Gospels were written when the breaking of bread had been a regular practice in the life of the

church for years. Matthew, and Mark, therefore, may have thought it unnecessary to express Jesus' intention with those words. They were taken for granted.³⁰

Anamnesis means to “bring to mind.” It is not simply reminiscing or calling to mind in a mechanical way. Relating anamnesis to the Eucharist, Jovian Lang says the following:

Anamnesis is the essential part of the Eucharistic Prayer after the Consecration that commemorates the Lord’s Passion, Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. ... it continues the notion of memorial by recalling the saving actions of God in Christ. At the same time, it has an obvious connection with the concepts of praise, blessing and thanksgiving based on the remembered deeds of God – which have been previously expressed. The anamnesis also takes for granted the fact that the saving action of Christ works here and now in the hearts of those present at the celebration bringing them close to God and one another.³¹

These two quotes shed further light on the directive in verse 17 that Christ gives to His disciples, that they are to take and divide among themselves what He is giving them: His directive has present applications and future implications.

Thus, one more consideration regarding verse 19 is the pattern of “*took*”, “*gave thanks*”, “*broke*”, and “*gave*.³²” It is the pattern to this day that is reflected in every single Eucharistic celebration.³³ The key point here is this: The Last Supper is the source of the

³⁰ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitel, *The Lord’s Supper. Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1353.

³¹ Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, 28.

³² Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy, New Edition* (Bloomsbury, NY: T&T Clark, 2015), xx.

³³ Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans-Lightning Source, 1982), 151. Martin criticizes Dix’s fourfold description of took, broke, gave thanks and gave as being rooted in the patristic and pre-Nicene eucharist as the Offertory, Thanksgiving Prayer, Fraction Rite and Holy Communion as being unexceptional.

Eucharist rather than its model; and, Luke 22:14-20 is the origins of the Eucharist, not the institution of it.³⁴ And an important quote from Glenn Hinson,

The Christian liturgy dramatized real events in the history of salvation and invited the Christian to participate in them, the true meaning of anamnesis. In the eucharistic service, the early Christians were convinced, Christ's saving act itself was present.³⁵

20. Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

"*Likewise, He also took the cup after supper*" is not found in Mark or Matthew. This phrase is found in Luke and in Paul's account, I Corinthians 11:25. Another connection between the Lukan account with Paul's.

"*cup*," As stated earlier, Luke is twice as long as the other three Last Supper narratives, and though closest to the oldest account in I Corinthians 11:23-26, he includes details the others do not have, and these additions situate the origins of the Eucharist within the structure of the Passover. While Matthew, Mark and Paul have only one cup, Luke has two: one before the meal, and one after the meal, which points to the origins of the "*eucharisteo*" (Eucharist), in which Jesus says the following words: "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.*" This second cup in Luke's Gospel is not confusing when put within the context of the Passover itself in which four cups of wine are drunk. As F. L. Cross cogently articulates how the Last Supper that becomes the

³⁴ Eugene LaVerdiere. *Dining in the Kingdom of God*. (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 24.

³⁵ Glenn E. Hinson, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire* (Mercer University Press, 1981), 192.

Lord's Supper, is the *origin* of the Eucharist, which the Jewish feast was the “*adumbration*.³⁶

The first Passover in Exodus went through various revisions from its inception in Egypt to it being incorporated into the Levitical priesthood and Temple sacrifice.³⁷ Every Passover had four cups of wine to be consumed throughout the meal.

³⁶ F. L. Cross, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1022. *Adumbration*: to shade, to outline in a shadowy way, to sketch; to suggest beforehand, or to, foreshadow in a vague way; to obscure, overshadow. In biblical exegesis and hermeneutics this is typology. Cross's insight here is exceptional.

³⁷ Brant Pitre. *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, (New York: Image, 2016), 59-68. Pitre thoroughly explains these developments between the first Passover and the Passover at the time of Jesus. He explains four distinct differences: 1.) Location: in the original Passover the lambs were sacrificed and eaten in the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. In the time of Jesus, the lambs had to be sacrificed in the Temple and eaten in the city of Jerusalem. In addition, in the original Passover, every Israelite father was able to offer sacrifice on behalf of his family. But at the time of Jesus, only the Levitical priests could pour out the blood of the lambs on the altar. 2.) Sacrifice: the second difference is that the lambs in the Temple were, so to speak, crucified with wood being inserted from shoulder to shoulder and from the buttocks to the mouth, which were in the shape of a cross, where prior to this they were roasted over a fire akin to being on a spit. 3.) Remembrance: the third difference was the original Passover was sacrificial atonement; but at the time of Jesus, the Passover was not only a sacrifice but also a memorial (remembrance: *anamnesis*) by which Jews would both remember and make present the deliverance by collapsing the distance between the first Passover and the one they were celebrating by making it present (Exodus 13:8, “In every generation a man must regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written... ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.’”) Thus, the people did not just remember the exodus, they actively participated in it. 4.) Messiah: the fourth difference was looking for the coming of the Messiah and the new era of salvation. The first Passover, therefore, was a night of watching for the coming of the destroying angel who passed over the houses covered in the lamb’s blood. In time, this night became an expectation for the coming of the Messiah and the redemption he would bring. There was a passing over of the destroying angel, and a hovering over of protection for all those who were covered in the blood. Pitre, then explains how the Passover was re-presented and re-interpreted by Jesus in the following ways: 1.) Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on the same night the lambs were eaten by the Jewish people. Recall, *Jesus did not speak about eating the lamb but rather about Himself*. 2.) Jesus explicit command that what He was saying and doing were to be repeated in this New Passover, this new covenant. Jesus, therefore, saw Himself as the long-awaited Messiah and the new Passover lamb. Recall *how John the Baptist says of Jesus, there goes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*. In other words, Jesus knew full well that a first-century Jew would have known, that when it came to the Passover, you did not only have to kill the lamb, in order to be saved from death, it was imperative that you also eat the lamb. This was necessary at the first Passover and also at this new Passover. The difference between them, however, was that now the lamb is a person, and the blood of redemption is *His* blood. I Corinthians 5:7-8, “Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the feast!” And, I Corinthians 10:16, “The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion in the body of Christ?”

The first cup (*kiddush* = cup of sanctification) is drunk at the beginning of the Passover, after the blessing: “Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.” The second cup is then mixed with water but not yet drunk. The youngest child then asks his father why this night is different from all other nights. The father explains by telling the story of the Exodus and interpreting the importance of it, which would include the explanation of the paschal lamb and why unleavened bread and bitter herbs are eaten. After this explanation, the second cup is then drunk and a blessing over the bread (Hebrew: *matzah*) is given. This bread is broken and distributed to everyone by the host, and a piece of it is eaten. It would have been at this time that Jesus “*took* bread, and He *gave thanks*, and *broke* it and *gave* it to them saying, “This is My body which is *given* for you. Do this in *remembrance* of Me” (Luke 22:19). Jesus is giving a new explanation for understanding why He is changing the script. (In John’s Gospel, this is when Jesus is giving His last teaching to the apostles, John 13-17.) The dinner follows, and at the end of the dinner, the third cup of wine is drunk followed by the blessing of thanksgiving being prayed. This third cup is the cup of blessing (*berekah*). Then the *Hallel* Psalms are proclaimed, after which the fourth cup of wine is then drank.

The first cup in Luke’s narrative (Luke 22:17) corresponds to either the first or second cup of the Passover. (The preponderance of scholarship favors the second cup.) The cup of wine that Jesus proclaimed as being His blood (Luke 22:20) is most probably the third cup.

What about the fourth cup? None of the Synoptic Gospels or Paul’s accounts mention this fourth cup as being consumed. The answer to this question has been probed

by looking at Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in the Synoptics and Jesus' last words from the cross in the Gospel of John.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays that He will not have to drink this cup: Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:36; and Luke 22:42. The obvious question that rises to surface is why did Jesus use this metaphor when referring to His impending suffering and crucifixion? The Passover is still in the background and foreground. Is Jesus praying to the Father about the fourth cup? Jesus has changed the Passover script identifying His body and blood as the new covenant through His self-sacrifice. Is Jesus weaving His own fate into the completion of the Jewish Passover meal? If so, then when the fourth cup has been drunk it means His death will have occurred. Is that why He did not drink the fourth cup at the Passover with His disciples? Will He complete the Passover by drinking the fourth cup? If so, when? Various scholars have claimed that when Jesus cried out from the cross and was subsequently given the sponge attached to the end of a hyssop branch (which was also used in the first Passover to apply the lamb's blood to the doorposts) is when the fourth cup was consumed and the Passover was completed: John 19:28-30, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there, and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."³⁸ Pitre goes on to say, "In short, by means of the Last Supper, Jesus transformed the Cross into a Passover, and by means of the Cross, He transformed the

³⁸ Scott Hahn, *The Fourth Cup: Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross* (New York, NY: Image, 2018), 106-116. Scott Hahn elaborates very well on thoroughly explainig in depth the fourth cup.

Last Supper into a sacrifice.”³⁹ I also find it useful to see the statement “It is finished” uttered by Jesus at the cross, has additional levels of meaning that only serve to enhance the points made by Hahn and Pitre.⁴⁰

“*is the new covenant*” This again is a phrase that Luke and Paul have that Matthew and Mark do not have. This reference to the “*new covenant*” is a direct allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-34. Hinson confirms this in the following:

It is highly probable that the Last Supper of Jesus and the Eucharist of the early churches had covenant implications. According to unanimous early traditions, the Last Supper, from which the early church undoubtedly drew its eucharistic practice was a covenant observance. The Pauline-Lucan tradition as a matter of fact, connected it with Jeremiah 31:31, the “*new covenant*” passage.⁴¹

The covenant is a binding relationship. It is the central concept for the bond of loyalty and love between God and His people. The covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18 and 9:9-17 was followed by the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:18, which was enacted by the splitting of victims (wherein God declares this will happen to Him if He were proven to not be faithful to this covenant with Abraham). The symbol to ratify this covenant reflecting Abraham’s acceptance, understanding and commitment, was the rite of circumcision, “the spilling of blood,” in Genesis 17:2-21. The Exodus story begins with God remembering His covenant in Exodus 2:24, “So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” The “*rhythm*” I spoke of earlier begins in Exodus 3 (the moment of revelation) to Exodus 12 (the

³⁹ Pitre and Hahn, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 107.

⁴⁰ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Passion and the Cross*, ed. Alicia von Stamwitz (Franciscan Media, 2015), 58-59. Rolheiser sees the words “It is finished!”, uttered by Jesus at the Cross as also being an end to Jesus’ own struggle with doubt, fear and loneliness; as well as the fact that the reign of sin and death is finished.

⁴¹ Hinson, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire: Identity and Adaptability*, 97–98.

moment of liberation) to the giving of the Torah on Sinai as another articulation of that covenant in Exodus 19:5 (revelation + liberation = covenant.) The people are then to observe this covenant by remembering. The promise of a “*new covenant*” written in human hearts (and no longer on tablets of stone) is promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, and will become the basic and primary category for Christians to express their sense of a new relationship with God the Father through Jesus (cf. II Corinthians 3:4-18; Galatians 3:15-18; 4:21-31; Hebrews 7:20-28; 8:7-13; 9:11-15; 10:15-16; 12:18-24.)

“*in My blood*” This is another phrase that Luke and Paul share that Matthew and Mark do not. Like the old covenant at Mount Sinai, this new covenant must also be ratified by blood. In Hebrew thought, the life of a creature resided in its blood. Johnson approaches it this way:

The ability of wine to symbolize blood is patent, and in the symbolism of Torah, blood signifies life: when blood is poured out, therefore life is lost. Leviticus 17:11 states: “the life of all flesh is in its blood.” And the logic of sacrifice is therefore: “it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of its life.” Shedding blood therefore constitutes the offering of life to God (Leviticus 16:1-34). Hebrews states the principle: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22) and is referring to both the covenant and the people with blood by saying, “behold the blood of the covenant” (Exodus 24:8, And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to these words.”) The verb used here by Luke (*enkuⁿnō; enkeo*) is used throughout the Torah in sacrificial contexts (e.g. Leviticus 4:18, 25, 30, 34; 8:15; 17:4).⁴²

Jesus’ reference to the cup as “*My blood*” therefore implies His very life. In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood nearly always signifies a violent death (cf. Genesis 9:6; 37:22; Proverbs 6:17; Ezekiel 18:10); and the same implication is present in verse 20. And as posited earlier, Jewish rabbis spoke of the “*blood of the covenant*” only with

⁴² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 339.

reference to circumcision, which was a “*spilling of the blood.*” Jesus uses this expression with reference to the first covenant, instituted when Moses threw blood on the people as shown above in Exodus 24:3-8. This new covenant, therefore, instituted by Jesus, is not ratified by the blood of a surrogate sacrificial animal, but by Jesus’ blood, which is not thrown *onto* believers as in Exodus 24:8, but, rather, received *into* believers. In both the bread and wine, the whole Jesus is present: His very person is in the bread, and His very life is in the cup.⁴³

“*is shed for you*” The sacrifice Jesus is talking about is vicarious. This phrase “*for you*” was also in verse 19. The significance here is staggering as it means two things: first in “*place of you*”; and secondly, “*in your behalf*.” Referencing the following scriptures nuances this incredible reality: Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things; I Corinthians 15:3, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”; II Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died, and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again;” II Corinthians 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

⁴³ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 630.

Conclusion: Luke 22:14-20

As quoted above, G. H. Carid in 1963 wrote, “The Lucan account is a scholar’s paradise and a beginner’s nightmare.” Some of his reasoning for having said that might be the following: Luke’s account is twice as long as the other Last Supper accounts; Luke has specific details the other accounts do not have; Luke’s account is most like Paul’s, which is the oldest. Thus, scholars are given a lot of material to wade through ad-nauseam.

Luke Timothy Johnson, also quoted above, mentioned at least five areas of controversy when considering Luke 22:14-20: 1.) that literary analysis is difficult when studying Luke because of the myriad of liturgical beliefs and practices that have been inserted back into his narrative; 2.) some scholars opt for the shorter version rather than the longer version claiming the text was tampered with; 3.) this is suspect about whether this account of the Last Supper actually occurred during the Passover; 4.) what Jesus actually meant by the words He spoke about Himself at this meal; 5.) how various medieval and Reformation spokesmen argued vehemently for Jesus changing the script at the *Last Supper* (the Passover, if that in fact is what it was) being nothing more than symbolic.

Each of these points that Johnson highlights must be taken seriously and extensively deliberated. I attempted, however feebly, to address most of these observations in this paper knowing all I have done is scratch the surface. Thus, given the amount of other material I will endeavor to cover, I have felt a bit constrained in the ability to adequately pursue the polemical arguments as well as thoroughly develop the apologetic arguments for the positions I have championed.

In my exegesis of Luke 22:14-20, I briefly examined each verse emphasizing some aspects that included phrasing, grammar, additions, and connections with other passages in the Scriptures including the other three Last Supper accounts. I detailed the importance of how Luke's account in many ways mirrored the Passover. I highlighted Christ's fervent desire, *anamnesis*, new covenant, and the cup(s).

In interpreting Luke 22:14-20 as a launching pad for the Doctor of Ministry project, I wove throughout this paper the viability and efficacy of the Eucharist, as a means of conversion, healing, deliverance, and evangelization. I am aware of the high Christological view I bring to the Eucharist that is certainly not an ecclesiology shared by everyone.

As this section comes to an end, I wrestle with what was not included: 1.) testimonies from many of the Fathers and Doctors on the Eucharist (Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine); 2.) testimonies of Eucharistic healings and deliverances by parishioners; 3.) defining terms (epiclesis); 4.) further development of the Eucharist, especially as it relates covenant as the “marriage supper of the lamb.”

Postscript

Luke loves stories. Who doesn't? We all have a story. As Christians, we want Christ to be the author and finisher of our story: His story told through us.

Luke also loves meals. His Gospel tells of ten of them and all were written as part of a much larger story.⁴⁴ Each one is a complete story in itself; each has its own cast of characters, wherein Jesus is the principal guest, host, or servant. Each story raises a particular issue, question, or problem, that Jesus deals with perfectly. Each story has both external and internal elements that comprise dramas. The external elements include a script, a director and players, words, sounds, actions, a time to meet, and the use of space while the internal elements include tempo, emotions, and the senses.⁴⁵ This Last Supper account in Luke is a double drama that includes all the external and internal elements that comprise this true story: the Passover retold, re-presented, re-interpreted, and fulfilled in Jesus.

This Last Supper account in Luke is the eighth meal and serves as a fulcrum point between the previous seven meals and final two meals. It is the gospel event that looks backwards with everything having been fulfilled in Christ (Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 5:39-40, 46) and looks forward to the meals that will be celebrated with the risen Christ being with them (i.e., Luke 24:30, 42; Acts 2:41-47; 10:41) while remaining in the present moment. This drama, this *anamnesis*, is what unfolds during every Eucharist as an experience of “disbelieving for joy” as recorded in Luke 24:41.

In the Jewish Passover, it begins with the candles being lit which can only be done by a woman. At the Annunciation, Mary is chosen to be the new ark of the covenant that brings the light into the world: Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-38.) Mary, chosen to be the

⁴⁴ Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of Eucharist According to Luke* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007), 13. La Verdiere also explains how the Last Supper unfolds on the doorstep of the passion with the Lord’s Supper, as the first meal of the new covenant, standing on the threshold of the resurrection.

⁴⁵ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 81.

mother of God, was the first to fully host His Presence. Her *Magnificat* was a spontaneous proclamation of how her life was magnified as Christ was telling His story through her, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name (Luke 1:46-56.) At the Visitation, John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of his mother Elizabeth at the presence of Mary who is hosting the light of the world (Luke 1:39-45.) The shepherds hear the announcement of the good tidings of great joy from a host of heavenly angels of what is happening in Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-20; also cf. Gal. 4:4-7; John 3:16; 1:14; Phil. 2:6-11)

At the second commissioning and return of the seventy in Luke 10, Jesus rejoices in the Spirit with shouting and leaping over what the Father was doing (Luke 10:21-24.)

In Luke 12:49-50, Jesus says, “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! This verse carries with it the same intensity as Luke 22:15, Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” It is reminiscent of Hebrews 12:2 “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.”

Every believer in Christ, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, is refreshed, renewed, and refilled at every Eucharist. Every Eucharistic liturgy has a meal-shape to it.⁴⁶ Hosting His

⁴⁶ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Eating Together, Becoming One* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2019), 86.

presence in the Eucharist, when embraced, magnifies our life, and brings continual healing and deliverance for us. It empowers us for furthering His kingdom.

The entire gospel story of revelation, liberation and covenant in Christ our Passover is remembered, repeated, and experienced in every Eucharist, and as we fully participate in this mystery of Christ's love for us, it has the power to change our story.

Thus, I end where I began: still wanting to know more of Christ's fervent desire. And with that, embark on a Doctor of Ministry Project of Christ being on full display through the Eucharist: in us for transformation and on us for manifestation.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Life of St. Catherine of Siena

I began the Biblical Foundations paper with the following: “In Luke 22:15, Jesus says to the twelve apostles, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,’ and how I continually have a deep longing to be given more revelation about Christ’s fervent desire; and concluded with how I am embarking, on a Doctor of Ministry project of Christ being on full display through the Eucharist: in us for transformation and on us for manifestation.

In this Historical Foundations paper, I want to ardently pursue this *fervent desire* motif by looking at Caterina di Giacomo di Beninasa, known throughout much of the Christian world as St. Catherine of Siena. Who was she? What did she write? What did she teach? Does her life have relevance for today? How does her life speak significantly to the Doctor of Ministry project I am proposing? These are the questions that will be addressed in this paper.

I will begin with a biographical sketch that will include the historical and cultural context of her life as well as her canonization and being declared a Doctor of the church. Next will be a general description of her works. This will be followed by a brief

description of her theology on the Eucharist and then concluded by looking at her experiences with the Eucharist.

Catherine's Birth and Vision

Caterina di Giacomo di Benincasa was born in a quarter of the Fontebranda district within the city of Siena around Tuscany, Italy, on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25th, 1347.¹ She was born with her twin sister Giovanna. Caterina, or rather Catherine, was the twenty-fourth of twenty-five children.² Only Catherine and eleven of her siblings would live past infancy. Giovanna, her twin sister, was not one of them.³ Most all the surviving children continued to live at home including the wives of the older sons, and family servants.⁴ Catherine's parents were Jacopo di Benincasa and Mona Lapa Piagenti. Her dad was a wool dyer of "comfortable means," which meant he was very well off financially and were members of the ruling class.⁵

¹ Giacinto D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church: Notes on Her Life and Teaching.*, trans. Thomas McDermott O.P (Chicago, IL: New Priory Press, 2013), 53. The year of Catherine's birth is accurate but the date, March 25 cannot be verified because of the lack of documentation. It is noteworthy that D'Urso is regarded by many Italian commentators as the foremost expert on the mysticism of Catherine of Siena. Also, of interest, March 25 is the feast of the Annunciation as recorded in Luke 1:26-38. The word "feast" refers to a day in the Church year commemorating certain events in salvation history. The word "Annunciation" refers to heaven's announcement by the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary of her conceiving the Incarnate Word, Jesus, by the Holy Spirit.

² Suzanne Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," *Theological studies*. 58, no. 2 (1997): 3.

³ Mary O'Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth--Compassion for Humanity* (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993), 139.

⁴ Anne B. Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena: A Biography* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1987), 7. Many of the dye workers lived with Catherine's parent's also.

⁵ Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," 3.

Per her hagiographers, at the age of six, in 1353, Catherine experienced a vision of Christ, the “royal Christ”.⁶ According to Fra' Raymond of Capua, this first vision occurred over their families home church of San Dominica, on the via del Costone as Catherine was returning home from her brother, Stefano’s house after seeing her favorite sister Bonaventura.⁷ It is imperative to understand the lasting effect this vision had on Catherine and not to underestimate its importance. It would rival Paul’s vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus recounted several times throughout the book of Acts. This vision of the “royal Christ” was foundational for Catherine and set a trajectory for Catherine that lasted throughout the rest of her life.⁸

Catherine’s Vow

Again, according to her hagiographers, at the age of seven, in 1354, Catherine made a vow of virginity.⁹ This had come because of the vision of Christ that she had had a year earlier; and was now determined more than ever to pursue holiness in both body and spirit by remaining a virgin for her gentle holy love of God and gentle Jesus.

This vow of virginity that Catherine made at age seven can be a bit incredulous to us living in the twenty-first century. How could she have possibly understood what that meant and the implications of it for her future? An insight for a commitment of this

⁶ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, ix.

⁷ Blessed Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St Catherine of Siena: The Classic on Her Life and Accomplishments as Recorded by Her Spiritual Director* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books Publishers, Inc., 2003), 25.

⁸ Diana L. Villegas, “Catherine of Siena’s Wisdom on Discernment and Her Reception of Scripture,” *Acta Theologica* 33 (2013): 209.

⁹ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 30–59.

magnitude can only be grasped as one considers the whole of Catherine's life. Her childhood, as we might define childhood, was forever altered.

This vow of Catherine's became a source of great conflict and turmoil between her and her family who vehemently opposed her decision. The family's expectation was that Catherine would marry the man chosen for her. Wanting to lure her away from this "vow" of virginity, members of Catherine's family worked to make her more attractive by fashioning her appearance in the clothes she wore and how she styled her hair. These plans to sway her failed miserably. Her family then began to employ different tactics with the sole intention of convincing her of the efficacy of being married.

For several years her family treated her cruelly by verbally abusing her and ostracizing her. Furthermore, they dismissed their maid, took Catherine's room away from her, and she became the family's maid. They hoped to break her will during this treatment and she would agree to marry. It may be well to remember, that the marriageable age for young girls at that time began as early as twelve years of age.

Then, in 1362, at the age of fifteen, her favorite sister, Bonaventura, died during childbirth.¹⁰ The family became even more insistent that Catherine marry since Bonaventura's death left behind an infant and widower. This became the catalyst for Catherine committing her life to the Lord with even more fervor.¹¹ In an act of total defiance, Catherine cut off all her hair to end her parent's plan to marry her off.¹² In 1363, at the age of sixteen, Catherine publicly declared that she had no intention of ever

¹⁰ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 40–41.

¹¹ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 11–18.

¹² D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, ix.

marrying. Catherine's obstinacy won the day. Her family persuaded, agreed to let her remain unmarried.¹³ They also agreed with her choice not to join a religious order. These choices Catherine made were radically opposed to the customs of the time as women in the fourteenth century did not have a lot of options, given that being married or joining a religious order was the expectation.¹⁴

Catherine Joins the Mantalletas

Within the following year, in 1364, Catherine became a member of a group of women affiliated with the Dominican order known as the Mantalletas.¹⁵

The Mantelletas, known as the “mantled ones,” wore a sleeveless white tunic with a black mantle (hence the name) that was intentionally like the religious habit worn by professed Dominicans.¹⁶ Because they were made up of unprofessed laywomen, they were referred to as tertiaries, which meant they were the third order in rank. Their ministry was focused primarily on comforting the sick and helping the poor in their local community. Some people referred to them as the Sisters of Penance.

These women were primarily older widows who continued to live in their own homes. They had the reputation as having the “utmost respectability.” Catherine’s acceptance into the Mantelletas’ was not without controversy. Catherine, being younger, a virgin, and having most recently been a maid as a matter of discipline by her family,

¹³ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 46–50.

¹⁴ Villegas, “Catherine of Siena’s Wisdom on Discernment and Her Reception of Scripture,” 210.

¹⁵ Diana L Villegas, “Discernment in Catherine of Siena,” *Theological studies*. 58, no. 1 (1997): 22.

¹⁶ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 93.

was problematic: this group of Mantelletas in Siena did not want to don a maid with the Dominican habit nor admit a young virgin.¹⁷ Consequently, some of the older women were adamantly opposed to her joining them. One of these was a woman named Palmeria¹⁸. (I will explain the importance of her later.) Amidst the rancorous disputes, however, Catherine would eventually be received into the Mantelleta's.

Who were the Dominicans? The Dominicans, also known as the Order of Preachers, i.e., O.P., who oversaw the Mantelleta's, were founded by Dominic of Caleruega in France on December 22nd, 1216. They are one of the four mendicant orders, the other three being the Augustinians, Carmelites, and Franciscans. ‘Mendicant’ is from the Latin ‘mendicare’ which means “begging.” The mendicant orders rely chiefly or exclusively on charitable donations to survive. The four pillars of the Dominican order, (which would include the Mantelleta tertiaries) are prayer, study, preaching and community. They embraced a lifestyle of poverty and many of them traveled extensively. They primarily lived in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization, and ministry, especially to the poor.

As an observation, I have found it fascinating that my context of ministry is a congregation that exists in a low income, multi-racial urban area, whose survival is totally dependent on charitable donations. In this setting, evangelization, preaching, serving the poor, ministering to the sick in the community via the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and celebrating daily Eucharist comprises the primary vision and mission of Church of the Reconciler.

¹⁷ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 61.

¹⁸ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 133–138.

Catherine's Seclusion

For the next three years, from 1364 to 1367, Catherine, now a Mantelleta, lived in virtual seclusion in her home. She continued functioning as a house maid by doing a myriad of domestic chores. This time was also filled with works of penance that included extended fasts and intensified prayer.¹⁹ This seclusion was only interrupted by Catherine seizing every opportunity afforded her to receive the Eucharist at church.

Fra' Raymond of Capua, wrote how Jesus continued to sustain and guide Catherine's spirit during this intense period of seclusion and physical privation:

There seemed to be two Catherine's in her, one that suffered in a state of exhaustion, and another that toiled in the spirit; and the latter, fat and healthy of heart, sustained and strengthened the weakened flesh.²⁰

And of her continual experience of the Lord's presence, Capua also wrote:

apparently, she could almost perceive Jesus' presence, first in her imagination as she prayed and later as Jesus appeared more and more often to her physical senses." Catherine could, "actually hear His voice with her ears, and see His body with her eyes.²¹

Catherine's Mystical Espousal and Commission to Love Her Neighbor

At the end of this three-year period, she realized that the Lord was asking her to leave her solitary life. Catherine was very reluctant to do so, fearing she might lose some of her contemplative spirit. In prayer, Catherine told the Lord of her fears and apprehension, and she received the following reassurance from Him:

¹⁹ D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 1.

²⁰ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 28.

²¹ Baldwin, *Catherine of Sienan*, 29.

I have no intention whatever of parting you from Myself, but rather of making sure to bind you to Me all the closer by the bond of your love for your neighbor. Remember that I have laid down two commandments of love: love of Me and love of your neighbor... It is the justice of these two commandments that I want you now to fulfill. On two feet you must walk my way.²²

This was a significant time for Catherine as Jesus spoke of binding her to Himself and her commission to love her neighbor. The former was the mystical espousal. This occurred at the beginning of Lent in 1367. Jesus told her, "... I have determined to espouse you to Me in faith as I promised." In this vision that Catherine had, as Capua recounted,

Jesus' most glorious Virgin Mother appeared with the most blessed St. John the Evangelist, the glorious Apostle Paul, St. Dominic and the prophet David with his harp appeared. While David played sweet strains on the harp the Mother of God took Catherine's hand in her own most holy hand presenting her to her Son courteously asked Him to marry her to Himself in faith. The Son of God graciously agreeing, held out a gold ring with four pearls set in a circle in it and a wonderful diamond in the middle with His most holy right hand He slipped it on to the virgin's second finger saying, 'There I marry you to Me in faith, to Me, Your Creator and Savior. Keep this faith unspotted until you come to Me in heaven and celebrate the marriage that has no end. From this time forward, daughter, act firmly and decisively in everything that in My Providence I shall ask you to do. Armed as you are with the strength of faith, you will overcome all your enemies and be happy.'" The vision disappeared, but the ring always remained on Catherine's finger and though no one else could see it, it was always before her eyes. In fact, she frequently confessed to me in all humility that she could always see it on her finger and that there was never a moment when it was out of her sight.²³

Later in 1367, the next vision and encounter Catherine received from the Father dealt specifically with how to love her neighbor:

²² O'Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena*, 9.

²³ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 99–101.

Such is the means I have given to you to practice and prove your virtue. The service you cannot render Me you must do for your neighbor.”²⁴ The Lord told her that souls “love their neighbors with the same love with which they love Me.”²⁵ The Lord also taught her that all good and evil are done through one’s neighbor.²⁶

The Father then said the following to Catherine:

And because I loved you without being loved by you, even before you existed (in fact it was love that moved Me to create you in My own image and likeness) you cannot repay Me. But you must give this love to other people, loving them without being loved by them. You must love them without any concern for your own spiritual or material profit, but only for the glory and praise of My name, because I love them. In this way you will fulfill the whole commandment of the Law, which is to love Me above all things and your neighbor as your very self.²⁷

It was at this juncture that Catherine had an experience of seeing the beauty of the soul of an older woman of whom she had been nursing and caring for. This woman, Palmerina, referred to earlier, was a wealthy Mantellata. Because she had been obsessively jealous of Catherine, she was verbally cruel by spreading false rumors about her.²⁸

The Lord revealed the following to Catherine:

Look, dear daughter, at this soul (Palmeria). When it was already lost, I won it back through you. Is it not a thing of splendor? Would not anyone endure the greatest of trials in order to win so exquisite a creature? I myself am Beauty Supreme from which all other beauty is derived. Yet so enchanting is the beauty of the souls of men that I gladly came down upon this earth and shed my Blood in order to redeem them. How much more should you yourselves take on your toil and labor for the sake of one another, so that so splendid a creature may not be

²⁴ Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spiritual Discernment in The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena,” *Horizons* 9, no. 1 (1982): 53.

²⁵ Noffke, “Catherine of Siena,” 24.

²⁶ Schneiders, “Spiritual Discernment in The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena,” 57.

²⁷ Thomas McDermott, *Catherine of Siena: Essays on Her Life and Thought* (Chicago, IL: New Priory Press, 2015), 24.

²⁸ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 46.

lost? That is why I have given you a vision of this soul: to rouse you still more to spend yourself for the salvation of souls.²⁹

This vision of the soul's beauty motivated Catherine to petition God for a very specific gift: the ability to see the state of the soul of anyone she would meet. The Lord granted her request. She prayed daily for the gift of love because she felt so inadequate in friendship. She never found it easy to be a friend and she never found it easy to be with people. Her favorite companion was always the Lord Jesus. Leaving Him, and leaving prayer to be with people, was like leaving home to be in exile. She did it because Jesus told her to, not because it was what she wanted.³⁰ This vision of the soul's beauty marked the beginning of her thirteen years of unceasing involvement in service and ministry.³¹ Catherine was twenty years old.

Catherine's Maturity Deepens

McDermott, reflecting on the times in which Catherine lived, remarked on how positive and helpful she remained, being always mindful that the human person was made in the image and likeness of God; especially given the fact that she was the victim of intense criticism particularly because of her singular way of life. As a result, Catherine's reputation was constantly being scrutinized and her motivations questioned. However, she continued to remove from her life any passing of judgment upon her neighbor, be it

²⁹ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 29.

³⁰ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 80.

³¹ Villegas, "Catherine of Siena's Wisdom on Discernment and Her Reception of Scripture," 210.

lawful or accurate, and subsequently, continued to renounce all concern about how people might judge her.³²

Catherine was also earning a reputation as being wise, sweet, charming, and “*ardentissima carita*,” which is Italian for “very passionate.” Elizabeth Scalia recalls one of Catherine’s most often quoted statements, “If you are what you are meant to be, you will set the world ablaze.”³³

Catherine’s Cultural Setting

The historical and cultural setting of the fourteenth century, in which Catherine lived, was fraught with much chaos and controversy. Among other things, it was, according to Suzanne Noffke, O.P., a great century for mysticism.³⁴

The Black Death (or Black Plague) was rampant throughout the continent of Europe, killing over 60% of the population, estimated to be over fifty million people. The Black Death generated such overwhelming human misery that no one could avoid the incessant cry of the suffering poor for immediate aid.³⁵ This plague ravaged Siena in 1348, in 1363, and again in the summer of 1374:

Siena was reduced from around 42,000 to 15,000. Never before or since has any calamity taken so great a proportion of human life. The survivors were stunned. The Sienese chronicler Angolo di Tura tells of burying his five children with his

³² McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 33.

³³ Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2019), xix.

³⁴ Noffke, “Catherine of Siena,” 1.

³⁵ Schneiders, “Spiritual Discernment in The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena,” 57.

own hands. ‘No one wept for the dead’, he says, ‘because everyone expected death himself.’³⁶

Making matters worse, a famine also struck Siena in 1370.³⁷ It was also a time of tremendous political upheaval in Siena among rival families living in the various districts of Siena, who were continually feuding with one another.³⁸ The 100 Year’s war was still raging between England and France that affected all of Europe. In addition, there was ineptitude, complacency, and moral corruption among much of the clergy. There was an urgency for another Crusade to be birthed in order to accomplish two things: free the Holy Land from the Turks especially by liberating the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and, bring unity to the church.³⁹ And, last but not least, the Great Schism⁴⁰ was about to break out that would devastate the church and the papacy with the scandal of who was the rightful pope and where was the papacy to be located: Rome or Avignon.⁴¹ Even the Italian poet Dante and Bridgette of Sweden (who would eventually be canonized) railed against the scandal of the Avignon papacy. The Franciscans in Avignon coined the expression “the Popes Babylonian captivity.”⁴² Pride and self-

³⁶ Edmund Gardner, *The Road to Siena: The Essential Biography of St. Catherine*, ed. Jon M. Sweeney (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2019), 15.

³⁷ O’Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena*, 139.

³⁸ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 5.

³⁹ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 4.

⁴⁰ Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 305.

⁴¹ Schneiders, “Spiritual Discernment in The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena,” 57–59.

⁴² Sigrid Undset, *Catherine of Siena* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2009), 128.

indulgence were a pestilence that ravaged the Roman Catholic Church in the fourteenth century.⁴³ Catherine was about to fully enter all of this chaos.

Catherine's Initial Followers and Her Mystical Death

In 1368, at the age of twenty-one, Catherine's father died, and as Catherine became more engaged with the outside world a "family" of followers began to regularly gather and form around her. These included young people from the nobility, those who were cultured and the scholarly religious. They would more and more entrust themselves to her as they accompanied her on her missions of reconciliation and peace between various factions. They served as her secretaries and scribes for her writing. They recognized the authenticity and profundity of the mystical experiences she was having with the Lord. They were also challenged by her undaunted courage.

As Mary Zimmer writes,

When Catherine was 19 years old, and had spent three years in almost unbroken seclusion in contemplative prayer... God made known to her that it was His will that she should leave her solitude, and join a life of activity to one of contemplation... Her activity was prodigious: she cared for the sick, the poor, those in prison; she counseled and gave spiritual direction to bishops, religious, lay-people, she reconciled feuding Italian princes, and carried out social and civil work in many cities and states; she worked for the reform of the Church... She became the leader of an ever-growing number of followers, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, clergy, religious, lay-people, all bound to her by no other ties than those of personal affection and recognition of her holiness.⁴⁴

⁴³ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 90.

⁴⁴ Mary Zimmer, "'Two Bodies with One Soul': Catherine of Siena's Incarnational Model of Christian Mysticism," *Studia Mystica* 19 (1998): 21–22.

Many of these followers of Catherine affectionately referred to her as “Mamma.”⁴⁵ As Villegas states: “...she acted as spiritual mother to many who gathered in her room at her parent’s home.”⁴⁶

During the year of 1370 Catherine enjoyed a plethora of vibrantly intense mystical experiences culminating in a spiritual death as Jesus exchanged hearts with her. She described how Jesus took away her stony heart the result being her ability to love people with more intensity and commitment.⁴⁷ This propelled her with an even more fervent and passionate desire to bring the Gospel message of Christ to the world.⁴⁸

Catherine Receives the Stigmata

Then in 1375, while in Pisa, at the Santa Christina chapel, she received the stigmata:⁴⁹ Although invisible, the stigmata, was accompanied by much pain and weakness.⁵⁰ Capua wrote down the following as told to him by Catherine:

Father, I must tell you that, by His mercy, I now bear the stigmata of the Lord Jesus in my body. I saw the Lord fastened to the cross, coming down upon me in a blaze of light. With that, as my spirit leaped to meet its Creator, this poor body was pulled upright. Then I saw, springing from the marks on His most sacred wounds, five blood-red rays coming down upon me, directed towards my hands and feet and heart. Realizing the meaning of this mystery, I promptly cried out: ‘Ah, Lord, my God, I implore You not to let the marks show outwardly on my body.’ Whilst these words were still upon my lips, before the rays reached me, their blood-red color changed to radiant brightness, and it was in the form of

⁴⁵ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 2–6.

⁴⁶ Villegas, “Discernment in Catherine of Siena,” 22.

⁴⁷ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 72–73.

⁴⁸ O’Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena*, 139.

⁴⁹ Noffke, “Catherine of Siena,” 5.

⁵⁰ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 181.

clearest light that they fell upon the five parts of my body – hands, feet and heart.⁵¹

Capua questioned Catherine about the fifth wound, assuming it was in her side, but she insisted it was in her heart. Fra' Bartolomeo Dominici, who was with her, wrote that the pains associated with the stigmata, being so dire and bitter, and the source of an overwhelming sensation of physical weakness, became sweet and consoling as she prayed to the Lord.

She asked the Lord that sufferings be given her as a singular gift. And thus, it is manifestly apparent that those pains did not afflict her, but rather they were a singular refreshment to her, since through those pains asked from the Lord, she saw herself in some way conformed to her most exceedingly loving Spouse, Christ, in His pains. And so thus they also did not afflict her body intolerably, that is to say as before, but rather they comforted her, namely from the abundance of spiritual joy which they generated in her mind. And so thus, as I wrote, perhaps those pains remained in her body up to the end of her life, although mitigated in this manner.⁵²

This, too, can again be incredulous to us living in the twenty-first century, as we might stand and gaze at this in awe, disbelief, or skepticism. I personally can't begin to understand the depth of this kind of love, especially if I am prone to run from pain or discomfort. This kind of love can only be cultivated behind the veil in that place of deep intimacy with the Lord, the creator and lover of our souls. It is not a love of fear or reward but of union. I wonder about the richness of Romans 11:33, I Corinthians 2:9, Hebrews 6:19 and 1 John 4:17-19. I wonder about what sharing in Christ's sufferings might truly mean in Romans 8:15-17; or rejoicing in fiery trials in James 1:2-4 and I

⁵¹ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 73–74.

⁵² McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 98–99.

Peter 1:6-9, and not just picking up my cross but embracing it, Mark 8:34. I am humbled in the presence of this very passionate (ardentissima carita) twenty-eight-year-old girl.

Catherine's Last Years

According to the hagiographers, receiving the Eucharist was the central event in Catherine's day and for many years it was her only food. As of 1372, her fasting was almost total. It was the Eucharist that remained her constant source of strength and nourishment as her preaching, teaching, counseling, and travel, which was all done on foot, continued to increase.

Her political activity as a liaison for peace began in 1372 between various Italian states. In 1374, she traveled to Florence to the General Chapter of the Dominicans. In May the Black Death broke out again in Siena severely devastating the city. Wagonloads of dead bodies were buried in mass graves outside the city walls. The city services were discontinued because there were not enough workers, and the crops were left to rot in the fields. The smell of death and the shrieks of the dying filled the city that summer. Catherine immediately returned to Siena spending all her time caring for the sick and dying.

Fra' Raymond of Capua was one who became deathly ill. Catherine was taken to him. She laid hands on him and prayed for him. He wrote about how the Lord instantly cured him through her laying on of hands and praying for him. "It was as if something was being pulled out of me at the end of my limbs." Then she said this: "Have something to

eat now and then rest for a while and then go out again and work the salvation of souls and give thanks to the Highest Who has saved you.”⁵³

The most famous Black Death miracle attributed to Catherine, and depicted in a painting by G. del Pacchia, was the cure of Messer Matteo di Cenni de Fazio, rector of the Casa della Misericordia. He was stricken with the Black Plague while ministering to the sick in his own hospital, Casa della Misericordia.

It (Black Death) raged through his exhausted body. He felt the first symptoms at Mass one morning, and before the final prayer was said he was carried from the church like a dead man and brought to his room in the hospital. The physician who attended him told Raymond (of Capua) that there was no hope of his recovery. Catherine received the news that morning when she got home from her nightly rounds. She set out immediately for Misericordia, and as she strode down the corridor toward her friend’s room she cried out in a loud voice, Out of bed, Messer Matteo, out of bed, out of bed. This is no time for you to be lying here taking your ease. Messer Matteo smiled when he heard that familiar voice and obeyed it. He got up, cured, and went back to work.⁵⁴ (emphasis added)

At the end of the summer of 1374, the Black Death had subsided. Catherine was suffering from extreme exhaustion and with several other Manttelatte’s went to the Dominican convent at Montepulciano. Fra’ Raymond of Capua went as well. It was there that he and Catherine got to know one another better as he had just been assigned to be her biographer.⁵⁵

⁵³ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 64–65.

⁵⁴ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 66.

⁵⁵ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, ix-x. Catherine would have three confessors throughout her public life. The first was her cousin Fra’ Tommaso dalla Fonte, OP, in 1362. The second was Fra’ Bartolomeo Dominice, OP, in 1368. The third was Fra’ Raymond Capua, OP, in 1374, who would also become her friend and biographer.

In 1375, she traveled to Pisa where she received the stigmata, preached on the value of another crusade, and continued to work on reconciliation between various city states and the papacy. She then returned to Siena.

In 1376, she was sent to Avignon to meet with Pope Gregory XI and encourage him to return the papacy back to Rome. Gregory asked Catherine, whom he had come to trust immensely, to pray for him, after she received the Eucharist, and ask Jesus to send him a sign so he would know what to do. He had come to recognize the authenticity of Catherine's mystical encounters she experienced after receiving the Eucharist.⁵⁶ Catherine did as Gregory asked. After receiving the Eucharist, she became silent and rigid, rapt in prayer. Later that day she wrote telling him that God showed her no impediment to move the papacy back to Rome. A short time later she met and conversed with Gregory. She told him of a promise he had made to God years before that he had told no one about. He was astonished by the prophetic word Catherine received from the Lord.⁵⁷ She was then called back to Rome. Catherine now had twenty-two companions that accompanied her.

On January 17, 1377, pope Gregory XI, having left Avignon, entered Rome and the papacy with him. Catherine having had an intense mystical experience began dictating the *Dialogue*.

In March of 1378 Gregory XI died. He had been the seventh successive Pope of the French nationality. The Cardinals assembled to elect a new pope. They wanted an Italian. On April 8, Archbishop of Bari, Bartolomeo Prignano, who took the name Urban

⁵⁶ D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, xi.

⁵⁷ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 111–120.

VI was elected pope. Five months later the Cardinal's dissatisfied with Urban's strict methods, accused him of causing disunity and of being insane assembled and pronounced Urban's pontificate to be null and void. On September 20 the Cardinals, assembled at Fondi, elected Carelinal of Geneva, who took the name Clement VII. He was the antipope. He, Clement VII, set himself up back in Avignon. He was supported by France, Spain, Scotland, and Sicily, while the rest of Christendom remained under obedience to Urban VI, the bishop of Rome. Catherine having been sent to Florence was almost killed in a riot that broke out because of all the upheaval regarding popes and the papacy. She returned to Siena and finished the *Dialogue*. In November pope Urban VI sent for her to come to Rome to support his cause of being the rightful pontiff. By the end of 1378, Catherine had over forty companions who traveled with her.

The Great Schism began on September 20, 1378, and ended on July 26, 1424, when at the Council Constance, Martin V was elected Pope and peace was restored to the Church. In 1379, Catherine now in Rome, devoted most of her energy working for unity in the church. She also sent many letters to various parts of the Christian world to support the true pope. Most of her prayers were recorded at this time as well.

January of 1380, Catherine's health began to deteriorate rapidly. She could no longer eat or even swallow water. According to Noffke, except for a final few letters, her activity for the Church was totally in prayer and the offering of herself. On January 29th, she had her last final great mystical experience in which she offered herself for the church.⁵⁸ Till late February, from where Catherine was living, she dragged herself the mile or so to St. Peter's Basilica each morning for Mass and spent the day there in prayer

⁵⁸ Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," 7.

until vespers (i.e., evening prayer.) On February 26th she lost the use of her legs and was confined to bed. In the presence of much of her family, she died on April 29th, 1380. Catherine was thirty-three years old.

Canonization: Saint and Doctor

Before speaking directly to the process of Catherine's canonization, it would be fitting to mention an event that happened six years before her death at the general chapter of the Dominicans in Florence, Italy, in 1374. A meeting had been arranged by key members of the Dominican order, including Fra' Raymond of Capua, and it was then that he was officially assigned to Catherine to be her confessor, spiritual director and biographer.⁵⁹ Catherine was questioned on two major issues: first, what was her doctrine and how did she learn it; and, second, was she really going without food, and if so by what power?⁶⁰ The results: that her doctrines were orthodox from the Lord Himself,⁶¹ and that she did exist only on the Eucharist through the Lord's singular grace for extended periods of time, years in fact.⁶² This is a mystic gift referred to as *inedia*.⁶³

⁵⁹ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 234-243. Capua remarked how when Catherine met her heavenly Bridegroom in Holy Communion she was carried away in ecstatic visions and mystical bliss, but she was always thrown back into the bubbling cauldron of the world which bled from the sores made by the passions of men and their misfortunes. Catherine remarked once to him how she seemed to hover on two wings over the abyss of time and eternity where she would touch both shores but was never allowed to lie down and rest on either of them.

⁶⁰ D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 3. In 1371 during lent, Catherine fasted for fifty-five days. The only "food" she had was the Eucharist. This attracted a lot of attention.

⁶¹ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 151. It was declared that Catherine's doctrine was in fact "infused wisdom," i.e. it came as divine revelation.

⁶² Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 139–149.

It is also important to note that Catherine was continually scrutinized during her lifetime and even after her death.⁶⁴ Critics of Catherine have questioned how much of her life is rooted in myth and legend fostered by those who were committed to the cause of her beatification. Others have postulated that Catherine's writings were heavily edited by her cult following.⁶⁵ Still others have speculated that Catherine suffered from the disease, anorexia nervosa, created because of "survivor's guilt," in that Catherine survived infancy and her twin sister Giovanna didn't, and compounded by being a "special child" in Catherine being chosen by heaven which made her important resulting in her growing notoriety.⁶⁶ This disease of anorexia nervosa, that some speculated she had to have suffered from, would of course account for the supposed 'mystical experiences' that, in all likelihood, were simply hallucinations at best and demonic deceptions at worst.⁶⁷ These critics, with their unbridled scrutiny, however, have failed to rule the day.⁶⁸

⁶³ Kevin Orlin Johnson, *Apparitions: Mystic Phenomena and What They Mean* (Dallas, TX: Pangaeus Press, 1998), 146-147. Inedia means that a person eats virtually nothing year after year except the Eucharist. Another well documented case of inedia is Therese Neumann (1898-1962), who lived only on the Eucharist for forty years: 1922 to 1962.

⁶⁴ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 237 Her enemies called her a hypocrite, a shameless female, or a witch.

⁶⁵ Suzanne Noffke, "Catherine of Siena, Justly Doctor of the Church?" *Theology Today* 60, no. 1 (April 2003): 49–62.

⁶⁶ Julia Bebbington Babb, "Isn't Our Body the Only Thing We Have? Catherine of Siena, Medieval Fasting and (Post) Modern Anorexia Nervosa," *Medieval Mystical Theology* 24, no. 1 (May 2015): 6–22. "Survivor's Guilt" - That Catherine survived and many of her siblings did not and in particular her twin sister, Giovana.

⁶⁷ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 139-179. Rudolph Bell and Dr. Hilde Bruch discuss anorexia nervosa and holy anorexia. Babb's article, "Isn't our body the only thing we have? Catherine of Siena, medieval fasting and (post) modern anorexia nervosa," discusses this as well regarding the distinction between anorexia nervosa (the desire to be thin) and holy anorexia (the desire to be holy).

Eighty-one years after her death in 1380, Catherine was canonized a saint on June 29th, 1461, by Pope Pius II. Catherine was canonized a saint because of an exemplary life of holiness, tireless ministry to the poor and sick, the working of miracles, especially during the Black Plague, prophetic words (e.g., to Pope Gregory XI) along with wise counsel to those who sought her discernment and direction, deliverances, and the depth of her teachings in the letters, prayers, and the *Dialogue*, which will be later explained.

Catherine, for most of her life, was illiterate. Her knowledge of Scripture was not internalized because of formal study, but rather because of her experience of God in prayer and of her personal reflection.⁶⁹ She learned to read sometime during her three years of solitude, from 1364-1367, probably at age twenty. It's debatable as to whether she ever learned to write. In 1367, the Lord spoke the following to her:

...there has been an upsurge of pride, especially in the case of men who imagine themselves to be learned or wise, that My justice cannot endure them any longer. To confound their arrogance, I will raise up women, ignorant and frail by nature, but endowed with strength and divine wisdom. For it is only just that those who try to exalt themselves should be humbled. Therefore, be brave and obedient when I send you out among people. Wherever you go I will not forsake you, I will be with you, as is My custom and will guide you in all that you are to do.⁷⁰

An integral part of the canonical process was to thoroughly examine Catherine's works which flowed from her mystical experiences with the Lord. Catherine's works

⁶⁸ Don Brophy, *Catherine of Siena: A Passionate Life*, Reprint edition. (New York: BlueBridge, 2011), 94-96. There were three primary sources of opposition that Catherine faced: 1.) The first source came from the envious. These were the Sienese Mantelate who bitterly resented her popularity and lifestyle, scoffed at the reports of her sanctity, spoke against how she moved about the city and gathered disciples around her, especially of those who were men. 2.) The second source of opposition came from the skeptics who could not believe that Catherine could measure up to the things being attributed to her and concluded she was both naïve and filled with vainglory. 3.) The third and largest source of opposition came from critics who could never accept the fact that Catherine was an uneducated woman and of a lower class. The trouble with Catherine, was that she did not "know her place."

⁶⁹ Villegas, "Catherine of Siena's Wisdom on Discernment and Her Reception of Scripture," 209.

⁷⁰ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 36.

were not extensive when compared to the voluminous writings of most other doctors of the church. Catherine has only three and they were all dictated: letters, prayers and the *Dialogue*.⁷¹ There were 381 letters, which are more like spiritual conferences, written to popes, cardinals and bishops, to kings and queens and members of nobility, to leaders of city states, to artists, to judges and physicians, to priests and religious, to friends and family, to a prostitute a mercenary soldier and a hermit; in other words, to a broad array of persons.⁷² Almost all of them were treatises on the truths of faith that she had experienced personally as expressions of God's love.⁷³ They reflected her ability to meet each person where they were in their life and write words that were helpful revealing her love for each person she corresponded with.⁷⁴ As Edmund Gardner writes, "some of the letters are purely mystical, ecstatic outpourings of Catherine's heart, the translation in ordinary speech of the conversation of angels."⁷⁵ This sounds very prophetic, akin to reading one's mail.⁷⁶ Her 26 prayers, written the last four years of her life, as O'Driscoll

⁷¹ D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 8. The Dialogue was dictated in Siena in different sessions in 1378, while Catherine was in ecstasy to three secretaries: Stefano Maconi, Neri di Landoccio dei Pagliarsi, and Barduccio Canigiani. It is certain that it was finished before Catherine departed for Rome and most likely even before the outbreak of the schism.

⁷² McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, ix.

⁷³ Thomas McDermott, *Catherine of Siena: Spiritual Development in Her Life and Teaching* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Introduction, Loc 110, Kindle.

⁷⁴ O'Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena*, 19.

⁷⁵ Gardner, *The Road to Siena*, 5.

⁷⁶ Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue of the Seraphic Virgin Catherine of Siena: Dictated By Her, While in a State of Ecstasy, to Her Secretaries, and Completed in the Year of Our Lord 1370*, trans. Algar Thorold (Coppell, TX: The Newman Press, 1959), 106.

states, “make evident Catherine of Siena was a great intercessor.”⁷⁷ The following is the shortest and believed to be the very first prayer that Catherine wrote with her own hand:

O holy Spirit, come into my heart. By thy power draw it to Thee, its God, and grant me love with fear. Guard me, Christ, from every evil thought. Warm me and enflame me with Thy most sweet love, so that every pain may seem light to me. My holy Father and my sweet Master, help me now in all my ministry. Christ love, Christ love, Amen.⁷⁸

The *Dialogue*,⁷⁹ Catherine’s principal work, has been regarded as a compendium of her theological teaching.⁸⁰ It is called the *Dialogue*, because its contents are in the form of a dialogue between Catherine and the Lord while she was raptured in moments of ecstasy, or as McDermott states “the *Dialogue* is an example of a type of private revelation known as a successive locution;” and as a scholar who has studied Catherine extensively, McDermott reminds us that doing theology is essentially not a technique.⁸¹ It is divided up into ten sections with a pattern of petitions to God, his response and Catherine’s thanksgiving.⁸² The *Dialogue*, invites each of us to go deeper in complete surrender to the one who has created us, redeemed us and is sanctifying us.

⁷⁷ O’Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena*, 50.

⁷⁸ Gardner, *The Road to Siena*, 186.

⁷⁹ Noffke, “Catherine of Siena,” 15–22. This work uses a pattern of petition, response and thanksgiving. It address four petitions: for herself, for reform of the Church, for the whole world, for divine providence. It explains the way of perfection and “the bridge,” which is the central and most important part of the work. Catherine of Siena proposes hunger for souls as the crowning point of the whole spiritual journey. The work concludes with God summarizing what he has revealed to her and Catherine’s response of thanks and a hymn of praise to the Most Holy Trinity. She closes by praying that she may be clothed in truth.

⁸⁰ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 260–272.

⁸¹ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 36.

⁸² Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2006), 541.

Five hundred ninety years after her death, Catherine was declared to be a Doctor of the church by Pope Paul VI, on October 4th, 1970. She was at that moment the youngest of thirty-two doctors to have ever been given this title. Does Catherine deserve that title?

The following is the criteria for granting a doctorate: 1.) outstanding holiness; 2.) testimony of popes or general councils; 3.) distinguished teaching. Catherine certainly fulfils the first two requirements: holiness and testimonials; but what about her teaching from someone who was uneducated and illiterate for most of her life?

Jean Galot, SJ, explains further the barometer for measuring those worthy of the title “doctor”:

The doctor is one who has set forth revealed doctrine manifesting deep understanding of this doctrine and giving it an expression worthy of admiration, so that a special charism of light granted by the Holy Spirit can be recognized in him. What distinguishes the charism of the doctor, in fact, is the excellence of the doctrine, the way in which he understands and expounds revelation. This charism implies an effort of doctrinal penetration, reflection and elucidation, with regard to mysteries of the faith. This requires a certain personal originality, so that it is possible so to speak of a real contribution to doctrinal development.⁸³

What about Catherine’s doctrine? Was her doctrine distinguished, original and unedited? One of several experts on Catherine of Siena, Suzanne Noffke states:

It would have been impossible for those who contributed to the canonical process to make a categorical statement concerning Catherine’s originality and the authenticity of her writings, because the full evidence was not accessible to them. Now, however, through linguistic analysis of word patterns and themes in those works and the consequent placement of Catherine’s writings in chronological order, I have established that there can be only a single author of these texts. Because the terms of service of Catherine’s several scribes are not coextensive with the various linguistic and thematic developments in her works and because Catherine is the only person whose hand was in every one of these works, that single author is indisputably Catherine herself. The overlapping beginnings and

⁸³ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 35.

endings of periods when different linguistic patterns and themes occur is such that it would have been impossible for any group of scribes or editors to manipulate. Scribal manipulation of what Catherine dictated must therefore have been minimal, limited in general to minor grammatical and orthographic standardization. Her originality also is finally demonstrable from the establishment of the chronology of her writings. True, she does not break any new ground in terms of basic theological content or concept. It is clear, however, that, though she borrows quite freely from other authors, once she has borrowed, she continues to develop each idea in her own way and to integrate it uniquely into her own theological tapestry. In that development, that integration, that tapestry, she is original.⁸⁴

In 1970, Pope Paul VI declared Catherine of Siena, *Doctor Ecclesiae, Doctor of the Church*. This title dates to the Middle Ages. It affirms the combination of extraordinary holiness and outstanding doctrine in a particular person. Her status as a doctor, according to the pope was immense:

Spiritual exaltation bursts into our souls as we proclaim the humble wise Dominican virgin a Doctor of the Church. We shall certainly not find the apologetic vigor and theological boldness that mark the works of the great lights in East and West. Nor can we expect the uncultivated virgin of Fontebranda to give us lofty speculations which belong to systematic theology and which made the Doctors of the scholastic Middle Ages immortal. What strikes us most about the saint is her infused wisdom (which was the same term used at the Dominican General Chapter in 1374, and what Pius II reiterated in 1461 at her canonization). That is to say lucid, profound, and inebriating absorption of the divine truths and mysteries of the faith contained in the Holy Books of the Old and New Testament. How many rays of superhuman wisdom, how many urgent calls to imitation of Christ in all the mysteries of His life and His suffering, how many efficacious teachings about the practice of the virgin proper to the various states in life, are scattered through the saint's works! Her letters are like so many sparks from a mysterious fire, lit in her ardent heart by Infinite Love, that is the Holy Spirit. It seems to us that Catherine is the mystic of the Incarnate Word, above all of Jesus Crucified. She was one who exalted the redeeming power of the adorable Blood of the Son of God, shed on the wood of the cross in expanding love, for the salvation of all generations of mankind.⁸⁵ (emphasis added)

⁸⁴ Noffke, “Catherine of Siena, Justly Doctor of the Church?” 57.

⁸⁵ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 150–153.

Without a doubt, St. Catherine of Siena met all the requirements for receiving a doctorate: 1.) outstanding holiness; 2.) testimony of popes or general councils; 3.) distinguished teaching.

Catherine presents each of us with the possibility of pursuing holiness, regardless of our life's calling. On the six hundredth year of the anniversary of Catherine's death in 1980, Pope John Paul II, quoting from *Lumen Gentium*, spoke about how all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love. He was directly referring to the writings of Catherine of Siena. He then quoted from Catherine's Dialogue where the call to holiness is explained with uncompromising clarity:

...no one can draw back saying, 'I have my profession, I have children, or other encumbrances of the world; for this reason, I draw back and do not follow this way.' They cannot say so because I already told you that every state was agreeable and acceptable to Me (God), provided it was carried out with a good and holy will. Nor can it be objected that holiness is too difficult to reach.

Holiness, in fact, is an easy thing, but nothing is so easy and so delightful as love. And what I ask of you is nothing but love and delight in Me and your neighbor.⁸⁶ (emphasis added)

Catherine's Theology of the Eucharist

Catherine presented religious truth not from the perspective of theological scholarship but rather from that of an intimately lived experience. Her theology is solely rooted first and foremost in encountering the Lord, then reflecting on and appropriating these experiences. Consequently, Catherine, as a lay person, whose writings were not intended for cloistered religious or academics divorced from the world, were for everyone hungering for an encounter with the Lord.⁸⁷ She was "wholly possessed by the divine Beloved," and is a concrete example for all of us, as "to what depths the

⁸⁶ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 156.

⁸⁷ Catherine is the only member of the laity to have ever been given the title of Doctor. She was not formally educated so as to have earned any academic degrees. She was not a member of any religious order. She was an ordinary parishioner who lived an extra-ordinary life.

relationship of Christ can lead.”⁸⁸ Her experience and teaching on the Eucharist fully manifests this.

Catherine’s theology of the Eucharist can be distilled down to this fundamental insight that “humanity comes to find itself in love.”⁸⁹ This profound discovery is further enhanced when the person experiences the very life of the Most Holy Trinity magnificently revealed in the Eucharist.⁹⁰ As D’Urso explains how the blood of Jesus manifests to us the most important truth of all, namely the love that God the Father has for us.⁹¹ This knowledge of the Father’s love for us, experienced in the Eucharist, embraces us with the truth of how precious we are to Him, of His mercy for us in His infinite patience with our failings, and His infinite desire to empower our potential.⁹² The revelation of this truth liberates us for love. The Eucharist is, then, a “constantly renewed meditation of God’s love for us.”⁹³

The Eucharist is also the mystery of our redemption actualized through the blood of Jesus. Catherine wrote to Raymond of Capua, her biographer and confessor enjoining everyone to “bathe, immerse, wash, nourish, satiate, drown, forget, warm, inebriate and clothe *oneself* in the blood of Jesus.”⁹⁴ It is in the blood of Jesus crucified that we become recreated in grace, purified, and liberated from every sin and strengthened on our pilgrim

⁸⁸ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 40.

⁸⁹ Susan F. Parsons, “St Catherine of Siena’s Theology of Eucharist,” *The Heythrop Journal* 44, no. 4 (2003): 459.

⁹⁰ Parsons, St. Catherine of Siena’s Theology of the Eucharist, 459.

⁹¹ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 31.

⁹² Villegas, “Discernment in Catherine of Siena,” 26.

⁹³ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 129.

⁹⁴ McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 37.

way towards heaven. Christ came to suffer that we might be healed; our doctor was our Savior who healed us with His blood.⁹⁵ God the Father said to Catherine:

My providence has given you food to strengthen you while you are pilgrim travelers in this life. And I have so weakened your enemies that no one but you yourself can harm you. The road is cemented with the blood of My Truth so that you may reach the end for which I created you. And what food is this? It is the body and blood of Christ crucified, wholly God, wholly human, the food of angels and the food of life. It is a food that satisfies the hungry soul who finds joy in this bread, but not those who are not hungry, for it is a food that must be taken with the mouth of holy desire and tasted in love. So, you see now I have provided for your strengthening.⁹⁶

In addition, the blood of Jesus is the key that miraculously opens up heaven for us. God the Father speaking to Catherine about this says to her:

And how was heaven opened? With the key of His blood. So, you see, the bridge has walls and a roof of mercy. And the hostelry of holy Church is there to serve the bread of life and the blood, lest the journeying pilgrims, My creatures, grow weary and faint on the way. So has My love ordained that the blood and body of My only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly human, be administered.⁹⁷

The Eucharist is in fact and truth, the sacrament of the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ: all God and all man.⁹⁸ These are inseparable.

The Lord gave to Catherine word pictures to illustrate the efficacy and mystery of the Eucharist that transformed her understanding, memory and will. This is so reminiscent of Jesus' teachings that he so often gave in parables, word pictures to illuminate and illustrate truth, which is a tremendously effective teaching device that bypasses the limitations of rational thought embedded in a systematic approach. These

⁹⁵ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 222.

⁹⁶ Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," 279.

⁹⁷ Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," 66.

⁹⁸ D'Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 31–35.

images the Lord gives to Catherine convey the ineffable beauty and mystery of the Eucharist. The following are just a few examples of these illustrations.

The Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ are like a sun within the sacrament, and when one receives the Eucharist, an imprint of grace from the Holy Trinity remains on the soul: like a seal when pressed into warm wax leaves behind when lifted off.⁹⁹ The sun never leaves its orbit, never divides. It gives light to all the world, to everyone who wants to be warmed by it”¹⁰⁰ The Lord went on to explain to Catherine: “just as the sun cannot be divided, so neither can My wholeness as God. It is just as when a mirror is broken and yet the image one sees reflected in it remains unbroken. So, when the Eucharistic host is divided, I am not divided but remain completely in each piece, wholly God, wholly human and yet the image one sees is reflected in the mirror.”¹⁰¹ The Lord also spoke to Catherine about how our complete and total union is actualized in every Eucharist: “when you receive the Eucharist, you live in Me and I in you, just as the fish is in the sea, and the sea is in the fish, so am I in the soul and the soul in Me, the sea of peace.”¹⁰² I would refer you to John 6:56.¹⁰³

The Father also describes Himself to Catherine as the table, which offers us the food, the Son’s body, and blood on the table, which is the food: both His teaching and

⁹⁹ Madeleine Grace, “The Eucharist as Paschal Banquet in the Dialogue of Catherine of Siena,” *Emmanuel* 104 (May 1998): 220.

¹⁰⁰ Dennis Joseph Billy, “Catherine of Siena on the Eucharist,” *Emmanuel* 115, no. 5 (September 2009): 419.

¹⁰¹ Billy, “Catherine of Siena on the Eucharist,” 421.

¹⁰² Grace, “The Eucharist as Paschal Banquet in the Dialogue of Catherine of Siena,” 220. Cf. also D’Urso, 36.

¹⁰³ John 6:56, “He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” The word “abide” in Greek is ‘meno’ and means “to stay” and more specifically in this passage, “to be and remain united with him, one with him in heart, mind, and will.” NASB

Eucharist, and the table, which was set by the Holy Spirit, who then serves as the waiter to give us this food unto eternal life.¹⁰⁴

I am their bed and table. This gentle loving Word is their food, because they taste the food of souls in this glorious Word and because He Himself is the food I have given you: His flesh and blood, wholly God and wholly human, which you receive in the sacrament of the altar, established and given to you by My kindness while you are pilgrims and travelers, so that you may not slacken your pace because of weakness, nor forget the blessing of the blood; poured forth for you with such burning love, but may be constantly strengthened and filled with pleasure as you walk. The Holy Spirit, My loving charity, is the waiter who serves them My gifts and graces. This gentle waiter carries to Me their tender loving desires and carries back to them the reward for their labors, the sweetness of My charity for their enjoyment and nourishment. So, you see, I am their table, My Son is their food, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Me the Father and from the Son, waits on them.¹⁰⁵

The Lord also describes the Eucharist to Catherine as a bridge to walk through life on,¹⁰⁶ a wine cellar,¹⁰⁷ a cave where the soul learns the secrets of Christ's heart,¹⁰⁸ and a candle. Catherine refers to the candle, an image of the Eucharist as love. As the Father tells her, "I create your soul with a capacity for loving – so much so that you

¹⁰⁴ Bernard McGinn, "Catherine of Siena: Apostle of the Blood of Christ," *Theology Digest* 48, no. 4 (2001): 338.

¹⁰⁵ Noffke, "Catherine of Siena," 145-146.

¹⁰⁶ Grace, "The Eucharist as Paschal Banquet in the Dialogue of Catherine of Siena," 219.

¹⁰⁷ Grace, "The Eucharist as Paschal Banquet in the Dialogue of Catherine of Siena," 219. It is important to bear in mind that Catherine is very much aware of the power of the Eucharist in providing for the soul the effects of the entire Trinity's presence. Thus, for Catherine, her spiritual strengthening through the Eucharist leads to a deepening fruition of the indwelling Trinity. And thus, in every Eucharist one hears the words of the epiclesis in which the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine in the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the image of the wine cellar as the church is where the Body and Blood of Christ are dispensed.

¹⁰⁸ Parsons, "St Catherine of Siena's Theology of Eucharist," 462–463.

cannot live without love. Indeed, love meaning the Eucharist) is your food.”¹⁰⁹(emphasis added) The Lord deepens the illustration further:

each of us is a distinct candle, that burns with more or less intensity depending on what sort of material each brings to receive the fire, and yet each would have the whole light with all of its heat and color and brightness. It is the lighting of this candle, it is the enflaming of faith that happens when we receive the sacrament that becomes for us as fire, as the flame of God’s divine charity, warming the heart to know the amazing grace in which we are held and to let it burn in our own desires.¹¹⁰

Lastly: “when we receive the Eucharist, our candles are lit with the light of Christ while not diminishing the infinite light of His divinity.”¹¹¹

The soul’s discovery of the depth found in the Eucharist is realized when their fervent desire to partake is motivated by an unquenchable hunger and thirst for holiness.¹¹² This hunger is ignited when one understands the effects of the Eucharist which are union, holiness, love, mercy, wisdom, and fidelity which gradually transforms us. These qualities confirm that “the soul is in God and God in the soul.”¹¹³ This transformation is a barometer of God’s extravagant and even scandalous love for us. This love has gifted us first by our creation in God’s image and likeness, then by recreating us anew in the death and resurrection of Jesus and by the bread from heaven that continues to sustain us. Creation, Incarnation and Salvation are ignited and deepened in the

¹⁰⁹ Grace, “The Eucharist as Paschal Banquet in the Dialogue of Catherine of Siena,” 222.

¹¹⁰ Parsons, “St Catherine of Siena’s Theology of Eucharist,” 460.

¹¹¹ Billy, “Catherine of Siena on the Eucharist,” 420.

¹¹² Billy, “Catherine of Siena on the Eucharist,” 424.

¹¹³ Joel Giallanza, “‘You Left Us Yourself as Food’: Insights on the Eucharist from Saint Catherine of Siena,” *Emmanuel* 109, no. 6 (November 2003): 452.

Eucharist as the expansive love of God is offered to us. As Catherine says, this can only be the work of one who is “mad with love.”¹¹⁴

Susan Parsons reflecting on her own undoing as she studied Catherine from a scholars perspective had this to say, “the writings of a saint are pretty dangerous stuff: what she tells us of what she is doing calls into question what I think I am doing;” and, “Catherine’s understanding is unsettling, challenging us again what we believe to be true and knowing of one who just survived on the Eucharist: what constitutes a healthy diet?” Catherine’s danger, as Parson continued, “lies in taking me outside of myself” that causes me to deeply question: “what is to become of me?”¹¹⁵

Eucharist: Catherine’s Experience

Catherine desired to receive the Eucharist every day. After receiving the Eucharist, she would often feel her soul leave her body and be with Jesus reveling in such love and beauty so extraordinary that she could not find words to describe it: she could feel her soul melt into the love of God.¹¹⁶

Her participation in the sacramental life of the church was foundational to her relationship with the Lord.¹¹⁷ She became very passionate (“ardentissima carita”) about

¹¹⁴ Giallanza, “You Left Us Yourself as Food,” 449–450.

¹¹⁵ Parsons, “St Catherine of Siena’s Theology of Eucharist,” 458.

¹¹⁶ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 175–176.

¹¹⁷ Giallanza, “You Left Us Yourself as Food,” 448.

the Eucharist. Catherine experienced the Lord's extravagant love in the Eucharist as she was touched by "boundless charity" and the "fire of love."¹¹⁸

Her desire to receive the Eucharist daily, however, was a subject of much controversy. This was because the accepted belief at the time was that frequent reception of the Eucharist would make the recipient less reverent. This was not the case with Catherine, yet some bishops and priests would often cite this policy and refuse to give her the Eucharist. Another reason for refusing Catherine was what happened when she approached the Communion rail. She wept and cried aloud. Then after receiving the Eucharist, she would enter into ecstasies which caused further distractions. Apparently, it was disrupting worship and unsettling to the other worshippers and periodically drew curious onlookers. These ecstasies could last for hours, even past the closing time for the church. More than once the church staff threw Catherine out into the street rather than keep the church open. Passers-by, and those who thought that over-zealous Christians and exaggeratedly pious women were a public nuisance would give her a kick or slap as they went by. When Catherine wakened again, she had to limp home covered with bruises and spattered with dirt from the street.¹¹⁹ They were not willing to wait until these ecstasies ended.¹²⁰ On one occasion a priest tried to trick her by giving her an unconsecrated host. She recognized immediately and had sharp words for him. He was overcome with remorse and became convinced of Catherine's mystical gifts.¹²¹ Not being able to receive

¹¹⁸ Giallanza, "You Left Us Yourself as Food," 459.

¹¹⁹ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 60.

¹²⁰ Baldwin, *Catherine of Siena*, 175–176.

¹²¹ Undset, *Catherine of Siena*, 193.

daily Eucharist was a source of great physical and spiritual anguish. She would later in her life be able to receive the Eucharist daily without incident at the request of Raymond of Capua.

One of the eye-witness accounts of Catherine and the Eucharist came from Fra' Bartolomeo Domimici, O.P., who in 1368 joined the circle of disciples that had begun to surround her. He would eventually become her second confessor until Fra' Raymond of Capua was assigned to her in 1374 by the Dominican order as her official biographer. Until then however, Fra' Bartolomeo, who would spend many years with Catherine, wrote about his experiences with her and recorded the following testimonies:

Moreover, she would receive the sacrament of the Eucharist with such great desire of mind and affection of devotion and fervor of spirit that before I could touch the Host to her mouth, while still holding it in my fingers, I would sometimes feel the Host itself be snatched from my fingers by a certain violence, such that I was greatly amazed within me, and in the very beginning, that is, when I begin to minister to her the Sacrament of the Eucharist, I sometimes wondered because of this whether the Host had fallen on the ground. However, in the process of time, since I would be more attentive concerning this and would see the Host itself fly off, as it were, into her mouth, and then also since others asserted that this same thing had happened to them, I began, removing all fear and doubt, to venerate it reverently in my mind as something, as was due.

He also described how she would grip the lip of the chalice with her teeth with such tenacity that it was difficult to get it back from her. On two of the silver chalices which were used regularly, the bite marks were so pronounced he was surprised that she had not broken her teeth. He recalled how,

For when she had received the Host, her mind would be so caught up in God that she would immediately lose the use of the exterior senses, and the members of her body would grow rigid, such that they could more easily be broken than bent, and thus she would remain every day for about three hours and more, completely absorbed and insensible. Often, also, when she was placed in such ecstasy, speaking with God, she would utter deep and devout prayers and petitions. Hearing these words, those who were present, as commonly happened, would be moved to pious and devout tears. These prayers were for the most part redacted in

writing word for word: some indeed by me, but many through others, when she, as has been said, was uttering them with a clear and distinct voice.

He then stated how,

...these words and the sense of the words do not at all appear to be those of a woman, but the doctrine and opinions of a great doctor. And truly thus it was because it was not herself, but the Spirit who was speaking through her, as is apparent to every pious readers of those prayers.¹²²

I find this whole testimony of his to be incredibly profound, not to mention his referring to Catherine as a great doctor nearly six hundred years before she would be made a *Doctor Ecclesiae, Doctor of the Church*.

Catherine understood the power that resides in the blood of Jesus.¹²³ The Eucharist is the food by which the soul is nourished in the knowledge and love of God. I love this insight.

Throughout her life she would humbly proclaim how she had drunk repeatedly from the side of her Savior and would be then soaked by a shower of blood and fire from Him.¹²⁴ And, it is noteworthy that every one of her 381 letter began with the salutation, “I write to you in His precious blood.”¹²⁵

Catherine’s very last thoughts and prayers in this life were about the blood of Christ. She asked God to show her mercy, not because she deserved it, but because of the

¹²² McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 84–85.

¹²³ Parsons, “St Catherine of Siena’s Theology of Eucharist,” 464.

¹²⁴ McGinn, “Catherine of Siena,” 337. The Blood of Jesus that we can shower or bathe under to be cleansed (Revelation 7:14), is also our ransom (John 19:30, Acts 20:28), food (John 6:54–55), and voice. In Prayer 10 Catherine begs God to “give us a voice, Your own voice, to cry out to you for mercy for the world.” She is speaking of the voice of blood (cf. Genesis 4:10–11). The Eucharist gives us a share in Christ’s voice. The mouth speaks, tastes and chews. Catherine testified how the Eucharist left the taste of blood in her mouth.

¹²⁵ D’Urso, *Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church*, 30.

merits of the blood of Jesus. “Blood, blood, blood,” she cried, spending her very last energy on the words. Then she whispered, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” Catherine died, as she had lived, contemplating the blood of her Savior.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ McGinn, “Catherine of Siena,” 334.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

I converted from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism in my late teens. More than any other single factor, it was the Eucharist that drew me into the Roman Catholic Church. My first encounter with the Eucharist was when I was sixteen. I had grown up attending the First Baptist Church with my dad, mom, and older brother. We quit attending church as a family when I was thirteen, and shortly after that my mother, on her own volition, began attending a Roman Catholic church. Over the next year and a half, she took instructions from the parish priest and was received and confirmed into the Roman Catholic church. Neither my dad, older brother, nor myself had any interest in the Roman Catholic church whatsoever. Because my mother did not drive, she had to be taken to Mass, which happened nearly every day.

On this occasion, my dad had taken my mom to a prayer service known as First Friday, which occurred once a month. My mom wanted to stay there for at least three hours. Because I was sixteen and able to drive at night, was told to go and pick her up from this service. It would be the first time to set foot in a Roman Catholic church. When I entered the church to fetch her, I was overwhelmed by a sense of peace and glorious majesty the likes of which I had never experienced. There was a deep reverence and total silence engulfing the place. The haze and odor of incense permeated the church. It was

indeed a sweet-smelling aroma. People were seated separately throughout the church quietly praying. I stood there motionless for a time taking it all in. My eyes were drawn to an elevated area near the front of the church. I would later learn it was the sanctuary. In the middle of that area was an ornate table-like structure with beautiful candle stands and candles on its four corners. An elaborate “something” was placed in the middle of the table. I could not take my eyes off it. I felt warm, secure, loved. It was wonderful and incomprehensible all at the same time.

I went to where my mom was sitting, and she quietly gathered up all her things and we left the church to go home. I asked her what that was all about, specifically, what was that “thing” on the table in the front of the church. She explained to me that the table was an altar and the “thing” on the table was a monstrance. A monstrance is a sacred vessel designed to expose the consecrated Host.¹ First Friday, she explained is a time of adoring the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. I still did not understand what she was telling me, but I knew what I experienced was real. It was an experience that impacted me greatly. So much so, that three years later I, too, became Roman Catholic.

My second encounter with the Eucharist occurred when I was nineteen. I had been praying for months to have better understanding of Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist. I was taking instructions to become a Roman Catholic and was struggling with

¹ Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1989), 436. A sacred vessel designed to expose the consecrated Host to the faithful either for adoration or for carrying in procession on Maundy Thursday or Corpus Christi. In its early forms in the 13th century, it resembled a pyx (i.e. was either a small watch-shaped receptacle used to carry Holy Communion privately to the sick; or in the case of the monstrance: it was a round metal case in which the large consecrated Host was exposed in the monstrance and kept inside the tabernacle.) Eventually the monstrance grew larger and was extended at the sides.

how Christ could be actually present in the bread and wine. My Baptist background had taught me that communion was a symbol (an ordinance actually) to be received once a month at best, and that idea was still clamoring for attention. Although I was received into the Catholic church on a Friday night, I was still praying for understanding about the Eucharist. The following day, I attended a Saturday evening Mass. It would be the first time I would receive the Eucharist as a member of this local Catholic community. As I took my place in the communion line, I was focused on doing everything right. I looked up to the priest distributing the Body and Blood, when suddenly, he was no longer there. In his place, I saw Jesus standing there giving His Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist. I knew in an instant that the Lord had answered my prayer of nearly nine months. *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*: What you believe is revealed by how you pray.² It was a revelatory moment. I went back to my pew full of joy and smiling from ear to ear. I knew in that “Kairos” moment that it was true: the bread and wine became His Body and Blood.³

My third encounter with the Eucharist happened during a one-day retreat at a retreat center when I was twenty-two. At the end of the day, we gathered to have Eucharist. After receiving communion, I returned to my seat and was thinking how marvelous it was to be able to receive the Eucharist. In an instant, I was no longer there. I cannot put into words how I knew what was happening, but I know with certainty I was being drawn up into the bosom of the Father when Jesus walked up to me, put His arms

² The rule of prayer establishes the rule of faith. What you believe will be manifested by how you pray. Regarding the Eucharist: the rule of faith is the word received and the Liturgy is the word expressed.

³ Kairos is a Greek word that means a favorable or opportune time. Regarding Christian spirituality, it is used to indicate the intervention of God in time in history through Jesus Christ.

around me and said, “See how much I love you, that I give Myself to you this much every time you receive Me in the Eucharist.”

This experience, as well as the other two, powerfully impacted my spiritual life. They were my road to Damascus encounters. They jettisoned me into college and ultimately the seminary to study for the priesthood.

I was ordained a Roman Catholic priest at thirty-one, and twelve years later was received into the International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church. As a daily celebrant of the Eucharist for nearly thirty-five years (twelve in the Roman Catholic church and twenty-three in the Charismatic Episcopal church), I have been brought to tears on innumerable occasions. My reverence for the Eucharist, far from diminishing over time, only deepens as I explore the meaning of this sacrament. In this paper, my intent is to do just that: further explore the meaning of this sacrament. In this paper I will be developing a theological focus on the Eucharist by first laying the foundation by a review of fundamental theology. It is important to understand how the Eucharist fits into the economy of God’s revelation for our salvation so as not to marginalize the sacrament of the Eucharist.

This will be followed by examining the Eucharistic theology of several of the early church Fathers and Doctors.⁴ I will then, define four theological concepts pertinent to the Eucharist. I will also touch on what are some of the benefits and effects from

⁴ I am aware of the limitations faced with the voluminous material available on this subject, so having to pick and choose what to include and exclude is a daunting task, to say the least. This study, therefore, cannot begin to exhaust the theological implications for the Eucharist nor pretend to resolve all the difference of scholarly opinion presently discussed nor historically debated.

receiving the Eucharist regularly. In conclusion, I will briefly summarize how this paper will relate to my Doctor of Ministry project.

Fundamental Theology: Development of Doctrine

I begin with an overview of how theological doctrine developed. This is pivotal for understanding the importance of sacramental theology, and in particular the Eucharist, which flows from the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity.

Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, was seen by the Hebrew people as a transcendent, distant God. The Israelites refrained from speaking His name, referring to Him with descriptive names such as: El Shaddai (God Almighty), El Elion (God Most High), Elohim (God, plural in grammatical form but singular in syntax and meaning), Adonai (my Lord), among others. The name “Yahweh” (YHWH tetragrammaton) could be spoken in prayer only once a year, on the day of Atonement.⁵ Jesus taught His disciples a new and revolutionary way of relating to God. Through example and instruction, He revealed God as “Abba,” using a child’s name for “daddy” in ancient as well as modern Hebrew. Jesus’ understanding of God as Abba led the people to view God, no longer as an unapproachable God, but a presence close at hand. This new understanding transformed people’s relationship with God (Luke 11:1-13, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:1-7).

⁵ Warren Marcus, *The Priestly Prayer of the Blessing: The Ancient Secret of the Only Prayer in the Bible Written by God Himself* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2018), 81.

Instead of responding to God with strict legal observance of laws (as prescribed in the Ten Commandments and the Torah), the Jews were challenged to relate to God in a new and radical way. Followers of Jesus began putting less emphasis on strict observance to the letter of the law and more on insightful obedience to the spirit of the law. Their new and personal relationship with God as Abba led them to an understanding of the Ten Commandments and the Torah as a command to love God and their neighbor. These twin commandments were the essence of all laws (Matthew 22:37-40).

The new Christian relationship with God inaugurated by the Lord Jesus, led communities of faith to ask several fundamental questions:

1. Who was Jesus? Responses to this question led to concepts of Christology.
2. In light of Jesus, who was God? Discourse around this question eventually gave rise to triune monotheism.
3. In light of Jesus, who are we? This question led to an understanding of Ecclesiology and in particular Sacramental Theology: e.g., Eucharist.
4. Again, in light of Jesus, what would happen to them? This opened discussions on Eschatology.

From the answer to the question, who is Jesus we receive Christology; from Christology we develop Ecclesiology; and from Ecclesiology we develop Sacramental Theology and Eschatology. I consider each of these in turn.

The nature of Jesus was explained in the earliest Christology as: “Jesus is the Son of Man.” This title appears to have been the central Christology of the early Palestinian Church, according to which the “Son of Man” was an Apocalyptic figure, a future judge and savior. When Christianity began to spread outside Palestine into a Gentile culture, a

shift occurred that gave rise to a new Christology. The reason for this was that the meanings of Jewish Palestinian terms for Christ did not and could not transfer unchanged when introduced to people outside of Jerusalem. The language of the Christology of the Jerusalem Church would have weakened when it moved into the Hellenistic world. Some titles for Christ, among them, “Son of Man”, “Servant”, “Messiah”, and “Prophet” lost much of their impact in translation.

The title “Son of Man” derived its power from the framework of apocalyptic expectations and subsequent political movements of nationalism in and around Jerusalem (Daniel 7, Ezekiel 37). Likewise, the term “Servant”, took on a new meaning. Its significance was greater for the suffering Jerusalem Church, as described in the four suffering servant songs of Isaiah 41:1-4, 49:1-7, 50:4-9 and 52:13-53:12. The Hellenistic notion of “servant” lacked this connection with an extensive history of suffering while waiting for a redeemer.

The name “Messiah”, meaning the Anointed One of the House of David, lost much of its significance outside Palestine, where this powerful title would not evoke the same sense of glory and hope.⁶

The term “Prophet,” as applied to Jesus, indicated a specific connotation to Jewish believers as hope of the scriptural fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15, Malachi 3:1 and 4:5. This title, too, does not have the same significance for the Hellenistic culture that it has for Judaism.

⁶ The understanding of Messiah underwent three stages of development: anointed, the next king, idealized king or priest. It always carried with it a political connotation.

The title “Son of God” had both Old and New Testament meanings. In the Old Testament, it referred to king, angel, nation (such as Israel), and, when applied to an individual, a suffering, righteous man. This meaning was carried over into New Testament times, but only to a degree, as it was never taken literally.⁷ In the New Testament, “Son of God” and “Messiah” were interchangeable.

One perception of Jesus that was especially effective in making Christ understood in the Hellenistic world was that of seeing Jesus as a miracle worker; such a portrayal conformed to the Hellenistic view of a holy person. The title “Son of God” had connotations of a being who could work miracles and do spectacular deeds. The title, then, is a key to understanding Christological development once Christianity spread to Greece. With the shift in cultural center came a shift in the perception of Jesus’ mission, the overall emphasis passing from “suffering” Christ to a “glorious” Christ.

Another title that thrived in the Hellenistic environment was “Lord”. “Lord” is “mar” in Greek and means “sir.” It was a title of respect. In Hebrew, the word “Adonai” was a term that could be used for “sir,” “Lord,” or “God.” Both “Lord” and “God” could then be translated into the Greek “Kyrios” which encompassed very different concepts: “sir” and “Lord” or “God.” Its use in context determined which meaning was intended. Even during his earthly ministry, Jesus was at times called “Lord.” The early Church’s credo proclaims that “Jesus is Lord!” Such statements could well have been equating Jesus with God. The belief that God was now reigning through Jesus arose in the Gentile communities because of the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. People

⁷ It was not until the fourth century that the status of Jesus’ divinity was decided in the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

experienced the presence of Jesus personally, and proclaimed Jesus as Lord. The gifts were intended to hold the community together. They helped build up the community's faith in committed service to and for one another. The basis for the gifts was love, or agape: which meant love of God and love of one's neighbor (I Corinthians 12:14 and Romans 12:4-8).

The Lord's title of Kyrios used by Paul, was necessary as he entered the Gentile world. Jesus himself gave the term new meaning during his ministry. Jesus as "Lord" meant that he was alive in the present and near as a person, Lord of the living and the dead, of heaven and earth (Romans 14:9). This presence was particularly experienced in the Eucharist. Consequently, Paul teaches what it means to know Jesus as being present with each Christian individual and among the community as a whole. Paul experienced Jesus in an intensely personal way on the road to Damascus. He speaks of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord retelling this experience in Acts 26:12-18. Yet he also preaches Jesus as the Lord of the community and as "our Lord." This experience of the Hellenized Christian community differed from that of the Palestinian Christians in its primary focus on Jesus as being present here and now, (as in the Eucharist) and as being the Lord, a wonder-working God who imparted his power and gifts through the Holy Spirit.

The preaching of Paul to the Gentiles is the beginning of the kingdom of God going viral, with communities of Christians experiencing Jesus in a vital and immediate way. Paul's understanding of Jesus was rooted not merely in a historical figure who would ultimately return in the future, but in a fully realized sense that Jesus is Lord in a powerful, functional, and operative manner. Paul integrated his personal conversion into

a theology of activities being performed in Jesus that his audience could understand - healing, deliverance, and encountering Jesus as Lord in the Eucharist (I Corinthians 11:23-34). This understanding of Jesus did not come about immediately, but developed gradually, as issues and conflicts were resolved.

It would have been easier had the apostles declared all the truths of our Christian faith from the very beginning. Clearly, that is not what happened. As questions, expansions, misunderstandings, and heresies arose such as Docetism⁸, Gnosticism⁹, Arianism¹⁰, Nestorianism¹¹, Pelagianism¹², among others. Considering these challenges, early Christian leaders gathered to determine true doctrines that were aligned with the teachings of Jesus. Thus, from the first Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., the first Council

⁸ Justo L. González, *Essential Theological Terms*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 46. A term derived from the Greek, to seem or to appear. Docetism is the claim that Jesus did not have a physical human body, but only the appearance of such. Such doctrines were quite popular in the early church, and often were joined to dualistic views that only the purely spiritual can be good, while matter is evil, Jesus could not have had a human body, but only the appearance of one. Docetic doctrines seem to have circulated from a very early date, for I John 4:2 explicitly rejects them, and in many instances in the Gospels of Jesus' eating - even after the resurrection - seem to be an attempt to refute docetic tendencies.

⁹ Gnosticism promises salvation by means of secret knowledge. It is like Docetism in its rejection of creation, incarnation and the resurrection. I explain Gnosticism further in the Fathers and Doctors section below.

¹⁰ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 16. The doctrine of Arius, which led to the first great theological controversy after the end of the Christian persecutions and was rejected at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), and then at the Council of Constantinople (381 AD). Arius's position said that the Word who became incarnate in Jesus did not exist from all eternity with God, but that He is a creature - the first of all creatures, through whom God made the rest of creation, but still a creature. After much debate the councils issued a creed which made it very clear that Arianism was not acceptable, by including phrases about the Son such as "only-begotten, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father. To this, the council(s) added a series of anathemas against Arius and his teachings. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa were instrumental in clarifying the divinity of Christ, and therefore reaffirming the decisions of Nicaea at the Council of Constantinople.

¹¹ Nestorianism is discussed below when defining the hypostatic union and the Theotokos.

¹² González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 128-129. Rejected at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

of Constantinople in 381 A.D., the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., to the third Council of Constantinople in 680 A.D., it was emphatically declared that:

- 1) Jesus was both God and man, that he had a divine nature and a human nature, (which was referred to as the hypostatic union¹³)
- 2) God is a trinity (i.e., triune monotheism),
- 3) Mary was truly *Theotokos*¹⁴ – the Mother of God; and
- 4) Jesus had both a divine and a human will with the human will forever aligned with the divine will.

The church did not manufacture these doctrines. These doctrines were always there but had never been fully expressed until, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the need to do

¹³ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 81. A term put forth by St. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444) in his debates against Nestorianism. Nestorius held that in Christ there were two natures, each with its own subsistence or hypostasis. If it were not so, he claimed, the two elements of the union in Christ - his divinity and his humanity - would have resulted in a third reality, neither human nor divine, and it would no longer be correct to speak of a “union,” but only of the result of that union. It was for this reason that he insisted on Christ’s having two natures - the divine and the human - and two hypostases on which these natures subsist. It was for this reason that he rejected the principle of “communicatio idiomatum” (i.e. “sharing of the properties”), for predicates always apply to substance, to the hypostasis. In response to Nestorius and his followers, St. Cyril declared that the union in Christ is such that both his divinity and his humanity subsist in the one hypostasis, the Second Person of the Trinity. Thus, Christ’s humanity has no hypostasis of its own. While Christ is both divine and human, he is both in a single person. Therefore, all that is said about Christ is said about his person, and hence St. Cyril’s insistence on the “communicatio idiomatum.” This view was adopted by the Council of Chalcedon (451), which declared that Christ is both divine and human, and these two “concurring into one Person and one hypostasis.” [Note: “hypostasis” which literally means substance. This word played a very important role in both the Trinitarian and the Christological controversies.].

¹⁴ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 171. A title often applied to Mary, meaning “mother [or, more exactly, ‘bearer’] of God.” It was the focus of the debate around Nestorianism, and was finally affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD (third Ecumenical Council). Although at the time of the original debate the issues were essentially of Christology, many Protestants have rejected this title as an expression of what they felt was an excessive emphasis on Mary and her role in salvation. .

so presented itself.¹⁵ It is vital to remember that such concrete dogmatic doctrines of the Christian faith, such as triune monotheism, the divine nature of Jesus, and the hypostatic union, will never be comprehended based on knowledge from our senses or human reason alone. As David Keys says, “To have a correct theological understanding, one must always have the Spirit-guided teaching of the church, conjoined with the supernatural virtue of faith.”¹⁶ And as Bret Salkeld has said, “theology helps bring out the intelligibility of the deposits of faith.”¹⁷ Also, as Marie-Joseph Nicolas posits that, “the theology of the Eucharist, as it is called, is not a body of conclusions to be added to the

¹⁵ David J. Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence: What Is THAT about Anyway? Could Jesus Be Present-Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity-in the Eucharist?* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2015), 85–86.

¹⁶ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 94.

¹⁷ Brett Salkeld and Michael Root, *Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* (Baker Academic, 2019), 77. Example, theology does not ask: how did God create the universe, as the answer is by God’s power. Example, theology does not ask: how did Christ rise from the dead, for by faith we know only that by God’s power, did Christ rise from the dead. But theology must ask, “What does it mean to say that Christ rose from the dead? What is the intelligible content of such a claim.” A theologian cannot, strictly speaking, answer the question, “How can Jesus be fully human and fully divine? But a theologian can, in fact, help us to understand how the claim is not, simply, nonsense, or a contradiction of terms. If real presence is an article of faith, then transubstantiation is, quite simply, faith seeking understanding. It is, in other-words, theology. Transubstantiation’s role is simply to articulate the intelligible content of the claim that the bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood when the Church follows Christ’s command to “Do this in memory of me.” The context was historical because transubstantiation was being rejected as unintelligible. Thus, when an article of faith is challenged as incoherent, often because it is being misunderstood and misrepresented, as in the present case, faith needs theology if it is not to lapse into skepticism or fideism. In such a context, theology’s task is to clear away misunderstanding, though not with an eye to fully disclosing the mystery, for that is impossible. Theology’s task, rather, is to locate the mystery. Transubstantiation does not explain the mystery but rather protects the mystery.

truths defined by the Church or explicitly stated in the Scriptures; it is an attempt to comprehend the faith.”¹⁸

The theology of the Eucharist is, therefore, foundational to Ecclesiology in that it sets out to explore the question: “In light of Jesus, who are we.” The sacraments, and in particular the Eucharist, flow from the Incarnation and are integral in God’s economy of salvation. It is the Triune God manifesting His Presence to us as an extension of the Incarnation. It is, therefore, imperative to attempt to understand and articulate the validity and veracity of the sacrament of the Eucharist experientially, scripturally, and theologically.

In my Biblical Foundations paper on Luke 22:14-20, I argued for the validity of Christ’s Real Presence in the bread and wine by *verba testamenti*, words of institution, and epiclesis. I traced this in the other accounts in Mark 14:22-26, Matthew 26:26-30, and in Paul’s account in I Corinthians 11:23-34. In addition, Luke 24:13-35 (*The Road to Emmaus*) and John 6:22-71 (*The Bread of Life Discourse*) are read as supporting Christ’s Real Presence in the bread and wine. Acts 2:42 and 20:7, also testify to the practice of regular reception of the Eucharist. It is now time to flesh this out further by considering some of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

¹⁸ Marie-Joseph; translated from the French by R. F. Trevett Nicolas, *What is the Eucharist?*, First Edition, (Hawthorn Books, 1960), 35. Every instance of theological reflection has as its precise object the truth of faith which the mind is trying to grasp. What is of faith is inseparably bound up with what reason comprehends in it, and the latter’s efforts are always guided and inspired by the light of faith. A genuine theology leads to a better grasp of faith, a better expression of it in a complete synthesis which can be contemplated and at the same time reach the heart and affect our lives. Theological truth is not absolute as is the truth divinely revealed, except only in regard to principles. Yet it can be strongly supported and confirmed in the sum total of its development when it is generally accepted by the Church. If we are to understand the Eucharist, we must put it in its context. It can only be understood in the light of the economy of the Incarnation. The mystery of the eucharistic presence will remain incomprehensible to those who do not begin by believing that the body of Jesus is that of God made man, that of the Incarnate word. What is meant is that God took a body only so that he might be present among men in order to offer this body to them as the proper and necessary intermediary between our fleshly being and his Divinity.

Fathers and Doctors of the Church

The doctrines of the Church are not manufactured out of thin air. The doctrines were always there and only needed to be fully revealed as the need arose to do so. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church often use bold expressions to describe the unparalleled fusion that occurs in the Eucharist. One example is the illustration of two pieces of wax being melted, poured out and mingled together in describing how the body and blood of Christ passes into our body and blood.¹⁹ They speak of how Christ is not proved by the Eucharist, but rather that the Eucharist is proved by Christ.²⁰ It is noteworthy that the Patristic literature on the Eucharist covers almost nine centuries.²¹ I only have space to cover a few of these giants of the faith.

Ignatius

St. Ignatius, 35-107 AD., the Bishop of Antioch, who heard the Gospel preached directly from the mouth of John the Apostle. He wrote seven letters to local churches while being taken from Antioch to Rome where he would be martyred by being fed to the wild beasts in the Roman Coliseum in 107 A.D.²² These letters contained his polemical position against Docetism.

¹⁹ Salkeld, *Transubstantiation*, 77–78.

²⁰ Salkeld, *Transubstantiation*, 22.

²¹ James T. O'Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), 4.

²² Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 73. It is also believed that Ignatius heard the gospel from several other Apostles as well.

Docetism denies the true humanity of the Lord Jesus, declaring He is only a man in appearance but not in reality. Ignatius theologically elaborated on the doctrine of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist as a means of refuting Docetism. Ignatius posited that if Christ did not have a true humanity, then the truth of the Eucharistic substantial conversion would be senseless. Thus, if Christ was not truly human then the consecrated Host could not be his true human body. Ignatius emphatically stated that in the Eucharist we truly receive Christ's flesh and blood because Christ is true man and not a mere apparition of the Divinity: "The Docetist's abstain from the Eucharist and prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh which the Father, out of his goodness, has raised from the dead."²³

Ignatius vilified Docetism because of its unwillingness to believe the Eucharist is the very flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.²⁴ Ignatius's teaching on the Eucharist had an ecclesial meaning, pertaining to the church as well. He taught that the Eucharist unites each of us with Christ's physical Body and Blood to unite us more completely with His Mystical Body, the Church. He wrote that every Eucharist is a celebration that involves the entire Church and is a pivotal part of Her public worship. The Eucharist is the act of worship of the whole Christ: Head and members hierarchically ordered. The Eucharist is an essential component to the continuation of the priestly worship of Christ.

²³ Nicolas, *What is the Eucharist?*, 26. Cf. I John 2:22, 4:1-3; II John 7.

²⁴ Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 133. The Eucharist, according to St. Ignatius is the same flesh that suffered and died on Calvary, the same blood poured out for our sins, and who was raised from death on Easter. Docetism was the first heresy to deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Docetism denied Christ's humanity which included, of course, denying the presence of Christ's body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. not be the last heresy to deny the humanity of Jesus. .

Nicholas Afanasiev follows Ignatius's perspective from the Orthodox position in his book, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*: "The whole life of the faithful is an unceasing ministry to God, but in a particular way, intimately related to the ministry at the eucharistic assembly where everything begins and ends."²⁵ Afanasiev highlights the oneness of the church united in the Mystical Body of Christ in its worship at the Eucharist by insisting on the reality that there is only one church: "According to the catholicity of the Church, the unity of the Church is absolute. There are not two churches, the invisible and visible, the heavenly and the earthly. There is one Church of God in Christ, which dwells in all the fullness of its unity in each local church with its eucharistic assembly."²⁶ The implications of this are staggering: the liturgy in heaven is happening on earth at every Eucharist.²⁷

Ignatius also taught the way in which the Eucharist has the power to sustain us in this life while preparing us for eternal life: "...breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, so that we should live forever in Christ."²⁸ Thus, the Eucharist as an extension of the Word made flesh can heal us in this life and prepare us for eternal life.

Ignatius had a deep, personal, passionate love for the Eucharist: "I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life – which is the flesh of Jesus Christ the

²⁵ Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Michael Plekon, trans. Vitaly Permiakov (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 34.

²⁶ Afanasiev, *Church of the Holy Spirit*, 260.

²⁷ It is important to remember that the early church saw the Eucharist as the physical body of Christ and the Church as the Mystical body of Christ. This is another way of apprehending the liturgy as being a heavenly encounter.

²⁸ Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, 260.

Son of God... and I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life.”²⁹ The Eucharist is an invitation to intense passionate intimacy.

When writing to the Ephesians about their assembling to observe the Eucharist and worship, Ignatius reminded them of the power released in the Eucharist to vanquish and dispel the enemy: “the powers of Satan are destroyed, and his mischief brought to nothing by the concord of your faith.”³⁰ The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist engages in spiritual warfare on our behalf to protect and deliver us.

Amid heresy, persecution, and martyrdom, Ignatius was clear on what he had been taught, what he had experienced, and what he believed to be true about the Eucharist: intimacy, protection, healing and spiritual warfare.

Justin Martyr

St. Justin Martyr, 107-161 AD., a Palestinian philosopher who converted to Christianity, maintained that Christianity was the only sure and worthy philosophy.³¹ He traveled to Rome where he wrote several apologies to pagans and Jews, combining Greek philosophy and Christian theology. He was eventually martyred.

Justin wrote on the Eucharist in his work, *First Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho*, around 150 A.D. Justin teaches that Jesus Christ took on true flesh and blood for

²⁹ Bercot, David W. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More Than 700 Topics* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 251. O’Connor, 15.

³⁰ Hinson, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire*, 186.

³¹ Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979), 89. Justin had a thirst for God that set him on a course to search for truth: Stoicism, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, were bitter disappointments. He then found Christianity: “A fire was suddenly kindled in my soul. I fell in love with the prophets, and these men who loved Christ. I reflected on all their words and found that this philosophy alone was true and profitable.”

our salvation and therefore, the Eucharist contains the “flesh and blood of that Jesus who became incarnate,”³² and Christ’s taking on flesh and blood in the Incarnation is done so that our flesh and blood will be spiritually nourished through His in the Eucharist.³³ He points out that the same divine power that realized the Incarnation is the same power realized in the words of the institution narrative of the Eucharist, cf. I Corinthians 4:20, “For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”

Like Ignatius, Justin was clear on what he had been taught, and what he had experienced about the Eucharist being Christ’s true Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity and therefore, our nourishment in this life in preparation for eternal life.

Irenaeus

St. Irenaeus, 135-190 AD. was the Bishop of Lyons, captured by the Romans and later martyred in 190 A.D. Writing seventy years after Ignatius and thirty years after Justin Martyr, he published the most famous and influential refutation of Gnostic thought.³⁴ He had been a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of John the Apostle. Irenaeus developed an apologetic for the Eucharist in his work entitled, *Against Heresies*. He was battling the Gnostics, who like the Docetists, rejected the goodness of the body, for they saw matter as the source of all evil. They denied the resurrection of the body and the true humanity of Christ, which caused them to deny the true presence of Christ’s humanity in the Eucharist.

³² O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna*, 21.

³³ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 138.

³⁴ Marcellino D’Ambrosio, *When the Church Was Young* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2014), 58–65.

Irenaeus, like Justin Martyr before him, affirmed that the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist is our spiritual nourishment, which prepares us for the future gift of our participation in the glory of Christ's risen Body. It is the Eucharist that Christ informs us that creation is not to be despised, for he himself uses bread and wine, which are part of creation, as nourishment for all who believe in him. Rejecting claims to the contrary, he wrote:

How can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, which [flesh] is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of Him? – even as the blessed Peter declares in his Epistle to the Ephesians, that ‘we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.’ He does not speak these words of some spiritual and invisible man, for a spirit has not bones nor flesh; but [he refers to] that dispensation [by which the Lord became] an actual man, consisting of flesh, and nerves, and bones, -- that [flesh] which is nourished by the cup which is His blood, and receives increase from the bread which is His body. And just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, having received the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption, because the strength of God is made perfect in weakness, in order that we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves.³⁵

Irenaeus' teaching is crystal clear that the Eucharist nourishes our body in that it makes each of us immortal.³⁶ This insight nuances the depth of the Eucharist amidst his

³⁵ Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol. 1: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 169.

³⁶ Nicolas, *What Is the Eucharist?* 27.

most quoted statement: “the glory of God is a human being fully alive.” And this fullness of life is nourished in the Eucharist.³⁷

Cyprian

St. Cyprian, 248-253 AD., Bishop of Carthage in North Africa, maintained that those baptized by schismatics and heretics had no share in the blessings of the Church. He experienced severe persecution and was eventually martyred in Rome in 253 AD. He declared over and over how the Eucharist is the Sacrifice of Calvary: “and since we make mention of His Passion in all Sacrifices, for the Passion of the Lord is, indeed, the Sacrifice which we offer, we ought to do nothing other than He did.”³⁸

Athanasius

St. Athanasius, 295-373 AD., Bishop of Alexandria, and Doctor of the Church, wrote his classic polemics against the Arians while most of the Eastern bishops were against him. He suffered persecution and exile. Athanasius emphasized the reality of the Eucharistic conversion:

But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread has become the Body, and the wine the Blood of our Lord Jesus ... Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine – and thus is His Body confected.³⁹

³⁷ Robert Barron, *Eucharist* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 31.

³⁸ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 148. Bercot, 253. Keys, 78.

³⁹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 149–150. Bettenson, 209.

Cyril of Jerusalem

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 315-386 AD, Bishop of Jerusalem, and author of *Catechetical Homilies*, spoke passionately about the mystery of the real presence.⁴⁰ He wrote the following:

When what seems to be bread is not bread, though it appear to be such to the sense of taste, but the body of Christ, and that what seems to be wine is not wine, though that taste would have it so, but the blood of Christ... so strengthen your heart by partaking of that spiritual bread... Since then, Christ himself clearly described the bread to us in the words, ‘This is my body,’ who will dare henceforward dispute it? And since he has emphatically said, ‘This is my blood,’ who will waver in the slightest and say it is not his blood?⁴¹

The homily continues with the miracle of water being changed into the finest wine in John 2:1-12:

By his own power on a previous occasion he turned the water into wine at Cana in Galilee; so, it is surely credible that he has changed wine into blood. If he performed that wonderful miracle just because he had been invited to a human marriage, we shall certainly be much more willing to admit that he has conferred on the wedding guest the savoring of his body and blood.⁴²

Cyril is of course referring to Jesus’s invitation of His bride, the gathering faithful of the church, to receive His body and blood in the Eucharist. The purpose of the bread and wine becoming the body and blood in the Eucharist is, according to Cyril, in order for all communicants to share in Christ’s divinity:

So, let us partake with the fullest confidence that it is the body and blood of Christ. For his body has been bestowed on you in the form of bread and his blood in the form of wine, so that by partaking Christ’s body and blood you may share with him the same body and blood. This is how we become bearers of Christ, since his

⁴⁰ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1988), 152.

⁴¹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 150.

⁴² Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 150–151.

body and blood spreads throughout our limbs; this is how, in the blessed Peter's words, 'we become partakers of the divine nature. (II Peter 1:4).⁴³

Finally, Cyril speaks of the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that happens at every Eucharistic celebration occurring at the *epiclesis*. The *epiclesis*, also recognized by St. John Chrysostom is the invoking of the Holy Spirit over the bread and wine to consecrate them into Christ's body and blood:

We call upon the merciful God to send the Holy Spirit on our offerings, so that he may make the bread Christ's body, and the wine Christ's blood; for clearly whatever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and transformed.⁴⁴

Gordon T. Smith explains how the epiclesis is not a petition that merely supplements or completes the celebration of Lord's Supper but is at the very heart of the matter: "We participate in the Lord's Supper in the Spirit, and as we leave, we pray that we will return to the world in the fullness of the Spirit."⁴⁵

Hilary of Poitiers

St. Hilary of Poitiers 315-368 AD, Bishop of Poitiers was called the "Athanasius of the West" because of his defense of the doctrine of the common nature Father and Son against the Arians. He reiterates how the Eucharist has the power to sanctify, that is to divinize us precisely because the Body of Christ present in the Eucharist is united to Christ's soul and to His divine nature. Thus, by partaking in Christ's Eucharistic Body

⁴³ Alister E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 451.

⁴⁴ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 151.

⁴⁵ Gordon T. Smith, *Holy Meal, A: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 10.

and Blood, we receive Christ's Spirit and divine life, which is the foundation of the Church.⁴⁶

Ambrose

St. Ambrose of Milan, 333-397 AD, Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church and teacher of St. Augustine, speaks of the substantial conversion of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ by the *verba testamenti*:

Perhaps you say: 'The bread I have here is ordinary bread.' Yes, before the sacramental words are uttered this bread is nothing but bread. But at the consecration this bread becomes the body of Christ. Let us reason this out. How can something which is bread be the body of Christ? Well, by what words is the consecration effected, and whose words are they? The words of the Lord Jesus. All that is said before are the words of the priest: praise is offered to God, the prayer is offered up, petitions are made for the people, for kings, for all others. But when the moment comes for bringing the most holy sacrament into being, the priest does not use his own words any longer: he uses the words of Christ. Therefore, it is Christ's word that brings this sacrament into being.⁴⁷

Augustine

St. Augustine, 354-430 AD, Bishop of Hippo Doctor of the Church, was a voluminous writer on philosophical, exegetical, theological, and ecclesiological topics. He formulated the Western doctrines of predestination and original sin in his writings

⁴⁶ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 152–153.

⁴⁷ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 154-155. St. Ambrose emphasizes the “*verba testamenti*” which are the words of consecration/institution. He also speaks of the importance of the relics being under the altar stone which are purposefully placed there where Christ has become our victim on the altar, sacramentally, in the Eucharist.

against Pelagius.⁴⁸ One of his more famous quotes is apropos: “Seek not to understand so you may believe but believe so you may understand.”⁴⁹

Augustine, like most of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church spoke of the Eucharist as being a sacrifice wherein Christ is both Priest and Victim. In a similar fashion he also reiterated the realism of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist under the sacramental species of bread and wine. And lastly, Augustine, like so many before him, stressed the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ because the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ:

That bread you see on the altar and that has been sanctified by the word of God is the Body of Christ. That chalice – rather, that which the chalice contains, is the Blood of Christ. Through these things the Lord Jesus Christ wished us his Body and his Blood, which is shed for us unto the remission of sins. If you receive them well, you are that which you receive. And, We did not know him in the flesh, yet we have deserved to eat his flesh and to be members in his flesh.⁵⁰

John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom 347-407 AD, Patriarch and Bishop of Constantinople and Doctor of the Church, was one of the most eloquent and famous preachers of the Patristic period.⁵¹ Helmut Hoping reminds us of the importance of Chrysostom’s contribution to the theology of the eucharist by recalling the honorary title given to him: “*doctor eucharistiae*.”

⁴⁸ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 128-129. Pelagianism was a heresy rejected by St. Jerome and the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

⁴⁹ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 14.

⁵⁰ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 80–81, 86-89. Feingold, 157-162. Kelly, 450-454. Nicolas, 29.

⁵¹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 163.

In the Eucharist, the Christ who was crucified for us, who celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles, is present. He Himself causes the gifts of bread and wine to become his Body and Blood; ‘Christ is present. The one who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this table’ The Eucharist is the remembrance of Christ’s death, in which that death is carried out through worship. In the Eucharist is ‘declared that dread mystery, that God gave Himself for the world.⁵²

Hoping goes on to quote what is considered to be Chrysostom’s “densest” remarks on the Eucharist:

Do we not offer every day? We offer indeed [daily], but making a remembrance of His death, and this [remembrance] is one and not many. How is it one and not many? Inasmuch as that [Sacrifice] was once for all offered, [and] carried into the Holy of Holies. This is a figure of that [sacrifice] and this remembrance of that. For we always offer the same [Christ], not one sheep now and tomorrow another, but always the same thing: so that the sacrifice is one. And yet by this reasoning, since the offering is made in many places, are there many Christs? [By no means! Rather,] Christ is one everywhere, being complete here and complete there also, one Body. As then while offered in many places. He is one body and not many bodies; so also [He is] one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. That we offer now also, which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted. This is done in remembrance of what was then done. For (saith He) ‘do this in remembrance of Me.’ It is not another sacrifice, as the High Priest, but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance of a Sacrifice.⁵³

Hoping compares Chrysostom and Ambrose regarding the *verba testamenti* (words of institution) as being the decisive words of the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.⁵⁴

The priest, however, does not effect the consecration by his own power. Christ is the one who consecrates the gifts of bread and wine and makes them his Body and

⁵² Helmut Hoping, *My Body Given for You: History and Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2019), 99–100.

⁵³ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 100.

⁵⁴ St. Gregory of Nazianzen (329-390 A.D.) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 A.D.) both spoke of the absolute realism of the substantial conversion of the Eucharist in the bread and wine becoming the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. St. Gregory of Nazianzen used the illustration of the words of consecration being a knife that sacramentally immolates the Lamb of God.

Blood: ‘It is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but He who was crucified for us, Christ Himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and the grace is of God. ‘This is my Body,’ he says. This statement transforms the gifts.⁵⁵

Again, it is noteworthy that as mentioned earlier, Cyril of Jerusalem focused on the *epiclesis* where others had targeted the *verba testamenti*; and Chrysostom sees them as being united in the conversion/transformation of the bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ.⁵⁶ Through the *epiclesis*, bread and wine receive the Logos of God. They become the Eucharist and unite those who receive it with the risen Lord and are granted a share in eternal life.⁵⁷ Helmut Hoping states the following:

The Spirit comes down on the gifts and surrounds them; he brings about the mystical sacrifice. Finally, the two elements belong together inseparably: the words of Christ (*verba testamenti*) and the action of the Spirit (*epiclesis of the Spirit*).⁵⁸

The mystery thus realized is staggering – God the Father manifesting His love for us through His Son and the Holy Spirit. Triune Monotheism is experienced in every Eucharist. St. Catherine of Siena was given an image of the Eucharist as the Lord’s passionate uncompromising love for us with the Father as the table/altar, Christ as the food, and the Holy Spirit as the waiter who serves us. At every Eucharist, the Lord washes our feet again and again and again: in John 13 Jesus asked his apostles and each of us: “Do you know what I have just done for you?”

⁵⁵ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 100. St. Gregory of Nazianzen (329-390 A.D.) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 A.D.) both spoke of the absolute realism of the Eucharistic conversion: i.e. the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

⁵⁶ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 101.

⁵⁷ M. Basil Pennington, *The Eucharist: Wine of Faith, Bread of Life* (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Hawthorne, 2000), 80.

⁵⁸ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 101.

Chrysostom also elaborates on how the Eucharist is the supreme manifestation of the divine love of the Lord:

When you see [the Body of Christ] set before you, say to yourself: Because of this Body I am no longer earth and ashes, no longer a prisoner, but free: because of this I hope for heaven, and to receive the good things therein, immortal life, the portion of angels, converse with Christ, this Body, nailed and scourged, was more than death could stand against; this Body the very sun saw sacrificed, and turned aside his beams; for this both the veil was rent in that moment, and rocks were burst asunder, and all the earth was shaken. This is even that Body, bloodstained, the pierced, and that out of which gushed the saving fountains, the one of blood, the other of water, for all the world. This Body He has given to us both to hold and to eat; a thing appropriate to intense love.⁵⁹

Lastly, Chrysostom stresses that every sacrifice of the Eucharist is one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Calvary:

He is Himself then both victim and Priest and sacrifice... For we always offer the same Lamb, not one now and another tomorrow, but always the same one, so that the sacrifice is one. And yet by this reasoning, since the offering is made in many places, are there many Christs? But Christ is one everywhere, being complete here and complete there also, one Body. As then while offered in many places, He is one body and not many bodies; so also [He is] one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. We now offer that victim, which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted.⁶⁰

It is vital to understand that Chrysostom is explaining that the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist does not add a new sacrifice to that of Calvary. On the contrary, the Eucharistic sacrifice is one in time and place; it is the same as Calvary, though sacramentally present, precisely because the words of consecration (*verba testamenti* and *epiclesis*) make Christ's Body and Blood truly present on the altar.

⁵⁹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 165.

⁶⁰ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 165.

Cyril of Alexandria

St. Cyril of Alexandria, 375-444 AD, Patriarch of Alexandria, affirmed the reality of Christ's life-giving humanity in the Eucharist in the context of his Christological thought. This ultimately led to his condemnation of Nestorius in 431 A.D. emphasizing the divinizing power of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist through the hypostatic union. Cyril taught, that because Christ's flesh is that of a divine Person, it is life-giving, capable of giving us a share in the divine life and glory. This argument, of course, presupposes the real and substantial presence of Christ's humanity in the Eucharist.⁶¹

We believe that the Word of God the Father which if its very nature is life, united itself to a body animated by a rational soul and begotten of the blessed Virgin, and has by this ineffable and mysterious union made it lifegiving, so that, by causing us to share in him spiritually and bodily [evidently through the Eucharist], he raises us beyond the touch of corruption.⁶²

John of Damascus

St. John of Damascus, 676-749 AD, was an Arab monastic and theologian whose writings enjoyed great influence in both the Eastern and Western Churches. He is considered to be the last of the Fathers of the Patristic age. He said this about Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist:

If then, ‘the word of the Lord is living and effectual [Hebrews 4:12], and if ‘whatsoever the Lord pleased he has done’ [Psalm 134:6]; if He said: ‘Be light made, and it was made’; ... if by His will God the Word Himself became man and without seed caused the pure and undefiled blood of the blessed Ever-Virgin to form a body for Himself; -- if all this, then can He not make the bread His body and the wine and water His blood? ... And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine and water the blood of Christ. And I tell you that

⁶¹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 170.

⁶² Nicolas, *What Is the Eucharist?* 28.

the Holy Ghost comes down and works these things which are beyond description and understanding.⁶³

It is fascinating that the substantial conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood is attributed both to the power of Christ's words (i.e., *verba testamenti*) at the Last Supper (e.g., Luke 22:14-20) and the power of the Holy Spirit (i.e., *epiclesis*) who overshadows the gifts as He overshadowed the Blessed Virgin at the Annunciation to realize the Incarnation. The last of the Patristic writers, St. John of Damascus, encapsulates the limit to human reasoning in grasping the substantial conversion occurring in the Eucharist: "And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ... these things are beyond description and understanding."⁶⁴

St. Augustine said it well: "Seek not to understand so you may believe, but, believe so you may understand." Is it possible to believe and embrace mystery at the same time? Thus, just because one does not fully understand the mystery does not mean it is not true.⁶⁵ And I appreciate St. Ambrose's heartfelt comment concerning the substantial conversion of the Eucharist: "What the mouth speaks, let the mind within confess; what words utter, let the heart feel."⁶⁶

⁶³ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 174.

⁶⁴ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 175.

⁶⁵ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 134. Augustine is expressing an epistemological concern - knowledge seems to unhitch itself quickly from those who come as intense observers within a framework of trust and faith (fiduciary). Thus, Augustine's epistemological approach is comfortable with pondering and probing uncertainty and mystery.

⁶⁶ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 156.

Theology, as St. Anselm says, is not there to explain God but to draw us into the mystery of his life.⁶⁷ As St. Gregory of Nyssa adds, “I also ask: who has known his own mind? Those who think of themselves capable of grasping the nature of God would do well to consider whether they have looked into themselves.”⁶⁸ Thus, for Gregory, not only is the nature of God himself a mystery, but each of us as human beings created in God’s image, remain all too often such a mystery to ourselves. Bret Salkeld, notes:

The debate surrounding the real presence (or, we might say, participation) in the Eucharist were but the particular instantiation of a much broader discussion about real presence. While the church fathers and medieval theologians did look to the bread and wine of the Eucharist as the sacrament in which Christ was really present, in making this point they simultaneously conveyed their conviction that Christ was mysteriously present in the entire created order. Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist was, we might say, an intensification of his sacramental presence in the world.⁶⁹

All the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, previously discussed, believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They spoke about the substantial conversion in very real terms. They understood the limits to their theologizing, as the ineffable truths of the Eucharist were beyond humanity’s reason to fully grasp. These Fathers and Doctors were forced to clarify the undeniable truth of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist as they waged theological war against Docetism, Gnosticism, Arianism, Pelagianism, and Nestorianism. Many of them were persecuted, exiled, and martyred. All of them taught and wrote on how the Eucharist flows from the Incarnation. Many of them saw Malachi 1:11,

⁶⁷ Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 26.

⁶⁸ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 27.

⁶⁹ Salkeld and Root, *Transubstantiation*, 43.

For My name will be great among the nations, from the rising of the sun to its setting. Incense and pure offerings will be presented in My name in every place because My name will great among the nations, says the LORD of Hosts.⁷⁰

as a prophetic proclamation of the Eucharist being celebrated continually around the world. Several of them saw the miracle of the water turned wine in Cana by Christ as the first substantial conversion pointing towards the Eucharist. There is so much more that could be said concerning each of these Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as well as others who have not been mentioned, but this will have to suffice.

Anamnesis, Sacrifice, Concomitant, Transubstantiation

Let us now look at four theological concepts that are pertinent to the discussion of the Eucharist: anamnesis, sacrifice, concomitant, and transubstantiation.

Anamnesis

Anamnesis, literally means, “to make present.” It goes well beyond simply remembering. Anamnesis is the Greek word for remembering, and the Hebrew word is zakar.⁷¹ The Old Testament passages that have been used to point to anamnesis is Psalm 111:4, “The Lord has made a memorial for his wonders”;⁷² and in Exodus 12:1-28 regarding the Passover celebration of the Exodus event. When Jews celebrate the Passover, they do participate in that first exodus. Scott Hahn explains this well:

⁷⁰ I refer to St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus later on as two who viewed Malachi 1:11 that way.

⁷¹ Giles Dimock OP, *101 Questions and Answers on the Eucharist*, 2006, 39.

⁷² Jeremy Driscoll, *Theology at the Eucharistic Table* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 2003), 161.

In biblical religion, memory is not simply the psychological act of recalling a past event. Rather, it is the re-presentation of the event. Thus, even today, when Jews observe the Passover, they speak of themselves as participants in the Exodus, and they give thanks for their deliverance. When the son asks his father about the reason for their celebration, the father responds with a line from the Torah: ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt’ (Exodus 13:8). Liberation belonged not only to the last generation that lived enslaved in Egypt. The event of the Passover belonged to all Jews collectively and each Jew individually.⁷³

The past is brought into the present in the Passover which becomes a present ritual action.⁷⁴ This is of course also found in the Institution of the Lord’s Supper narratives in the synoptic gospels and in Paul: Matthew 24:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14-23, I Corinthians 11:23-34, (in addition, cf. Luke 24:13-35, John 6:22-68, Acts 2:42, and Acts 20:7). Because of *anamnesis*, the Eucharist recalls the past, is a voice in the present and reveals the future.⁷⁵

In making present the miracle of the Eucharist, the Last Supper and Calvary are brought to the altar. The Eucharist has one central focus which is Christ, the crucified and risen one.

John Drury makes a marvelous Christological connection involving anamnesis:

Jesus Christ was raised by God the Father; Jesus Christ arose and reveals himself to be the Son of God; Jesus Christ lives unto eternity in the power of the Holy Spirit. And these three are one. These three aspects of Christ’s resurrection correspond well with the threefold structure of breaking bread together: eucharistia, anamnesis, and epiclesis. First of all, we break bread together as eucharistia, as an act of thanksgiving to God the Father as the giver of all good gifts. Secondly, we break bread together as anamnesis, as an act of remembering Jesus Christ as the one who was and is and will be for us. Thirdly, we break bread

⁷³ Hahn, *The Fourth Cup*, 34–35.

⁷⁴ Keeping the Sabbath as proclaimed in the Decalogue at Mt. Sinai was the command to remember that God had created and redeemed His people from their slavery and oppression in Egypt.

⁷⁵ Abbot Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist.*, 1st ed. (Bethesda, MD: Zaccheus Press, 2003), 14.

together as epiclesis, as an act of invoking the Holy Spirit to move us and all things toward their eternal end... First, thanksgiving (eucharistia) is our mode of participation in Christ's own self-receiving risen-ness. Secondly, remembering (anamnesis) is our mode of participation in Christ's own self-revealing risen-ness. Third, invoking (epiclesis) is our mode of participation in Christ's own self-giving livingness.⁷⁶ [emphasis added]

Thus, the command of Jesus regarding the *anamnesis* in the Eucharist could be translated, “make present this sacrifice in my name.”⁷⁷ (I also talked about anamnesis in chapter 2.)

Alexander Schmemann reminds us that out of all creation, we alone are given the privilege to remember God, and through this remembrance to truly live. From the very first day of Christianity, humanity was taught to believe in Jesus Christ by remembering him and to keeping him always in mind.⁷⁸ This happens in the anamnesis of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Eucharist dramatizes the real events in the history of salvation in order that Christians can fully participate in, rather than just passively observing.⁷⁹

Sacrifice

The next theological doctrine relevant to the Eucharist is sacrifice. Helmut Hoping reminds us that the “Latin Fathers of the Church, like the Greek Fathers, regarded the Eucharist as an *oblation* (i.e., offering) and a *sacrificium* (i.e. sacrifice).”⁸⁰ The

⁷⁶ Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2016), 55–56.

⁷⁷ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 48–49.

⁷⁸ Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur, 1st ed. (Crestwood, N.Y: St Vladimir's Seminary Pr., 2003), 125–128.

⁷⁹ Hinson, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire*, 192.

⁸⁰ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 104.

Orthodox Church still believes the Eucharist is a sacrifice, as does the Roman Catholic Church.⁸¹ *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* states the following

Precisely because the sacrifice made, once for all, to the Father on Calvary more than suffices for the salvation of the world, the sacrifice we make to the Father daily in the Eucharist cannot be another and different offering from that made once by Christ. The Eucharist must, rather, be one and the same sacrifice as that offered by Christ on Calvary, now made by us in a different, that is sacramental way. Since the Eucharist is no other sacrifice than the one sacrifice of Christ, it must in reality be offered by him, though now with our participation, as it was not in the upper room and on Calvary. The Eucharist is, in other words, Christ's way of giving us a share in his once-for-all sacrifice.⁸²

To clarify this even further, when Christ becomes present in the Eucharist, He does not do this to repeat the sacrifice of the Cross. Rather He seeks to draw us into it, by inviting us to become fully engaged participants in His one perfect sacrifice. We are cleansed through His sacrifice for us, and this is the principal reason for the celebration of the liturgy, according to St. Basil.⁸³ We are priests and victims along with Himself. Thus, the Last Supper and Crucifixion at Calvary and the Eucharist are all the same sacrifice, not because the historical acts of the past are repeated or re-presented but because of the intrinsic unity that all these actions, past and present, possess in the one perfect Priest and Victim.⁸⁴ Galatians 2:19-20 magnificently bears this out: I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. This is actualized at every Eucharist.

⁸¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 285.

⁸² Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 513.

⁸³ Rany Makaryus and Fr Antonios Makaryus, *Scriptural Basis of the Divine Liturgy: Meditations on the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy of Saint Basil*, 2019, 46.

⁸⁴ O'Connor, *The Hidden Manna*, 302.

Here is what some of the Fathers and Doctors of the church say about *sacrifice*: St. Justin Martyr defends the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist by affirming that the Eucharist is the fulfillment of Malachi 1:11. St. Irenaeus also affirms that the correct interpretation of Malachi 1:11, is the Eucharist being the acceptable sacrifice continually offered. St. Cyprian of Carthage who emphasized the sacrificial aspect, “our Sacrifice corresponds to the Passion.” St. Cyril of Jerusalem calls the Eucharist “the spiritual sacrifice” and “un-bloody service.” St. Hilary of Poitiers declares that the Christian altar is a ‘table of sacrifice’; St. Ambrose proclaims that “it is His word which sanctifies the sacrifice we offer.” St. Augustine of Hippo says, “the visible sacrifice is the sacrament”, and St. John Chrysostom states that every sacrifice of the Eucharist is one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Calvary.

Daniel Cardo maintains that the key for understanding the Eucharist is the Cross and visa versa.

I maintain that the key for a balanced understanding of the different elements of the Eucharist is found – as the textual tradition shows – in seeing the institution of the Eucharist united to the sacrifice of the Cross... the Last Supper is the opening act of the Passion, culminating in the Cross and fulfilled in the Resurrection... The Eucharist comes from the Cross; the Cross offers the hermeneutical key for a harmonious comprehension of the different elements that inform the theological understanding of the Eucharist, because ultimately, the Cross and the Eucharist contain the same act of sacrificial offering.⁸⁵

In contemporary Western society, our understanding of this link between sacrifice and communion is very shallow. It is often forgotten that the Eucharistic sacrifice recalls that Jesus is first offered in sacrifice to the Father before being received in Communion. The Eucharist is not just a feast, it must be properly understood as a sacrificial banquet in

⁸⁵ Daniel Cardó, *The Cross and the Eucharist in Early Christianity: A Theological and Liturgical Investigation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 139–140.

which the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is first offered in sacrifice as an efficacious reality of our own interior sacrifice.⁸⁶ Mark O’Keefe also astutely states that “the Incarnate Son gives himself completely both to the Father and to sinful humanity; but in the encounter with sin, his self-giving takes the form of sacrifice.”⁸⁷ Mitch Pacwa, describes how the church from its beginning taught that the Eucharist is a re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, however, many Christian communities reject this out of ignorance.⁸⁸

Concomitance

The Latin etymology of “concomitance” signifies the act of walking along with someone as a companion. Its theological meaning is that the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ are accompanied, meaning that they are not alone, they come escorted by friends and companions. Those holy things, Body and Blood, are like the center of a group; they are escorted by other holy things without which they do not exist. Thus, concomitance means that the Body and Blood of Christ on the altar are perfectly identical with the Body and Blood of Christ in heaven; therefore, on the altar they are surrounded by all that surrounds them in the Person of Christ in heaven. Through concomitance, the whole of the glorious Christ is present in the Eucharist.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 489.

⁸⁷ Mark O’Keefe, *In Persona Christi; Reflections on Priestly Identity and Holiness* (St. Meinrad, IN.: Saint Meinrad School of Theology, 1998), 11.

⁸⁸ S. J. Mitch Pacwa, *The Eucharist: A Bible Study Guide for Catholics* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013), 33.

⁸⁹ Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist.*, 135–142.

Concomitance flows from the reaction to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. Among the Reformers, there was widespread acceptance of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist (including Martin Luther, John Calvin, with Ulrich Zwingli being an exception); but not when it came to the Eucharistic sacrifice. Concomitance was theologically able to bridge much of that gap between the two and was intimately hitched to the belief that Christ who becomes present in the Lord's Supper is the same crucified and risen Lord that is sacrificed and institutor of the Eucharist precisely as an *anamnesis* of his own sacrifice. Stated differently, Christ's presence is the presence of sacrifice.

Thus understood, the Eucharist contains the glorious risen Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ as he now exists in heaven seated at the right hand of the Father, but, at the same time the Eucharist makes mysteriously and gloriously Christ present as the Victim of Calvary who offers the sacrifice of his human life and pierced heart to the Father for forgiveness of sins. He does this sacramentally. He alone accomplishes this miracle. The Eucharist brings together and makes present the two poles of the Paschal mystery: The Passion and The Resurrection. This is the theological relevance of concomitance in describing how the Eucharist contains all whom Christ is and all of what He has accomplished.

Cardo confirms this by stating that, "it is the Eucharist that the mysteries of faith are brought together, as frequently expressed in the prayers of the sacramentaries, where Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection appear together in prayers for various celebrations. This unity comes from the sacrifice of the Cross that is renewed in

the Eucharist, called simply by the Fathers, sacramentaries, and *Ordines*, “the sacrifice.”⁹⁰

Alasdair Heron has suggested that concomitance is a “further doctrine” introduced so that transubstantiation:

does not leave us, so to speak, with the mere body and blood of Christ rather than his whole person and saving power. But it is not a supplementary doctrine as much as an observation – namely, of the fact that to say Christ’s body is present is to simply say that the whole Christ is present precisely in ‘his whole person’ and with his ‘saving power.’ Concomitance, therefore, is a further clarification that highlights the sacramental nature of Christ’s presence.⁹¹

Transubstantiation

The exact definition of transubstantiation is that in the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine is replaced by the substance of the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ, while the accidents (size, shape, color, texture, taste, and smell) of the bread and wine remain.⁹² The substantial conversion of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ was strongly affirmed hundreds of years before the term “*transubstantiation*” was ever used.⁹³ It is astounding, given the differing opinions resident in various Christian groups today, that there was absolutely no dissent on this topic among the writings of the Early Church Fathers and Doctors.⁹⁴ Salkeld, accurately

⁹⁰ Cardó, *The Cross and the Eucharist in Early Christianity*, 140.

⁹¹ Salkeld and Root, *Transubstantiation*, 107.

⁹² Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol. 2: From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 174.

⁹³ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 129.

observed how transubstantiation is an identity marker: accepting it is part of the Catholic identity, rejecting it is part of the Protestant identity.⁹⁵ Christiaan Kappes confirms this by seeing it as a lightning rod that creates all kinds of controversy.⁹⁶ Transubstantiation is a grossly misunderstood and misrepresented term. This is because the term is accused of supporting a physical, rather than a sacramental presence.⁹⁷ Yet transubstantiation was articulated precisely to affirm the Real Presence of Christ while avoiding any carnal, cannibalistic connotations. The Eucharistic presence of Christ – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – is entirely unique, and it alone is referred to as the Real Presence.⁹⁸

It seems that the Real Presence of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in the Eucharist is indeed for some: “...a hard saying, who can understand it?” (John 6:60.)

It may prove valuable to remember that *transubstantiation*, as a recapitulation of substantial conversion, is a theological term that expresses “what” happens, not “how” it happens: i.e. when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ by the Word

⁹⁴ David J. Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 186. It is noteworthy that the Orthodox church has never had a major dispute about the Eucharist. Also, the Orthodox churches separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1054 in a dispute unrelated to the Eucharist. As such, it is obvious the Orthodox, who believe in the Real Presence but do not use the term transubstantiation. They remain silent on the technicalities. .

⁹⁵ Salkeld and Root, *Transubstantiation*, xi. Martin Luther wrote, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, against the following: (1) that the Mass is called a “sacrifice;” (2) withholding the cup/chalice from the laity; and (3) transubstantiation. John Calvin called transubstantiation “a crude imagination” and the word “virtually equivalent to magic incantation.” Ulrich Zwingli denied the Real Presence completely referring to the Eucharist as a symbol only. He referred to communion as being “memorialism.” Martin Luther responded to Zwingli’s position by saying he would “sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics (i.e. Zwingli), I would agree with the pope that there is only blood.” Cf. Salkeld, xii-xiii, and 4-5. I can understand how a “cessationist” would not believe in the Eucharist because miracles are not possible.

⁹⁶ Christiaan Kappes and William Albrecht, *The Secret History of Transubstantiation: Pulling Back The Veil On The Eucharist* (Eagle Pass, TX: Patristic Pillars Press, 2021), 27.

⁹⁷ This is not about chemistry or physics as nothing about the chemistry of the bread and wine is changed at the Consecration.

⁹⁸ Joan Carroll Cruz, *Eucharistic Miracles and Eucharistic Phenomena in the Lives of the Saints* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2010), xii.

of Christ (*verba testamenti*) and by the power of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*). Paul Haffner theologically connects transubstantiation and sacrifice:

In the Eucharist, both being and action are important, but as elsewhere it is being that grounds action (*agere sequitur esse*). Hence it is that transubstantiation which makes present the Body and Blood of Christ also renders present Christ's Sacrifice upon the Cross.⁹⁹

The Church did not manufacture the theological doctrines of *anamnesis*, *concomitance*, or *transubstantiation* to justify the substantial conversion or sacrificial occurrence in the Eucharist. They helped to clarify and nuance the theological discussions of Real Presence often in response to heresies dealt with in the first seven ecumenical councils and to controversies that even today continue to be debated.¹⁰⁰

What are the Benefits of Receiving the Eucharist?

Let me begin by summarizing what the Fathers and Doctors wrote and spoke about concerning what the benefits are in receiving the Eucharist. The Eucharist:

1. Unites us with the Mystical Body of Christ in heaven and on earth by effecting within us a permanent and deepening union.¹⁰¹ Jesus made it quite clear: "He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him;"¹⁰²

Helmut Hoping reminds us that the Eucharist is the communication of the Logos

⁹⁹ Paul Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, 2016, 123.

¹⁰⁰ John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 13. This book considers the Baptist, Reformed, Lutheran and Roman Catholic view(s). They disagree over the meaning of the "Last Supper", the importance of it, and who should take it and when. They also disagree over what happens to the elements. Like the cessationist view regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit, there seems to be a similar belief resident in those who do not believe in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. Both positions are incredulous to me.

¹⁰¹ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 203.

¹⁰² Nicolas, *What Is the Eucharist?* 84.

to our mortal nature.¹⁰³ This communication, as Schmemann says, is rooted in love, which gives us access to the Father as we ascend to Him through the perfect offering of Christ.¹⁰⁴

2. Nourishes, sustains and sanctifies us in this life as it prepares us for eternal life;
3. Heals and delivers us, vanquishing the enemy.
4. Forgives and cleanses us from sin.
5. Imparts the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, as well as the moral virtues of supernatural prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.
6. Imparts heavenly joy and spiritual consolation.
7. Intensifies the indwelling of Christ in the soul and of the soul in Christ, and where Christ indwells, there also are the Father and the Holy Spirit with this indwelling.
8. Perfects of the invisible mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit on our behalf.
9. Reminds us to stand before Christ just as we are and with the express desire to be changed by him, which is, therefore, the proper disposition in which to receive this sacrament.¹⁰⁵
10. Intimacy and Unity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 167. He also states that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Kingdom which the Father longs to give to us: for the Kingdom of God is joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁵ Nicolas, *What Is the Eucharist?*, 93.

¹⁰⁶ Ralph Martin, *The Fulfillment of All Desire* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2006), 384.

The Eucharist is where we are most closely united with Christ in the saving acts of his dying and rising.¹⁰⁷ Peter Kwasniewski posits the following illustration that receiving the Eucharist is eating fire and spirit:

When we receive Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, we receive the source of all supernatural light and warmth, the light of truth, the heat of love, for indeed He is the “Sun of Justice.” We receive God Himself, the very Son of God. Who is inseparable from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Saint Ephrem the Syrian wrote: He called the bread his living body and he filled it with himself and his Spirit... He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit...It is because we receive divine fire – a fire more potent in the range and reach of its possible spiritual effects than any physical fire – that the worthy reception of the Eucharist is purifying, illuminating and unitive.¹⁰⁸

The Eucharist is that place of complete and perfect intimacy, and as Marie-Joseph Nicolas says in our corporate celebration of the Eucharist, “our love for Christ necessarily flowers in our love of neighbor.”¹⁰⁹ This sense of our neighbor flows from the personal revelation of how the Eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, who, ever lives to make intercession for us. We offer our intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest.¹¹⁰ This intercession involves our complete and total healing: “the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist will embody His mission of healing the wounded.”¹¹¹

Lawrence Feingold beautifully captures the passionate intimacy we are invited into at every Eucharist:

¹⁰⁷ Leonel L. Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1985), 179.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Kwasniewski, *The Holy Bread of Eternal Life: Restoring Eucharistic Reverence in an Age of Impiety* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2020), 5–6.

¹⁰⁹ Nicolas, *What Is the Eucharist?* 88.

¹¹⁰ Salkeld and Root, *Transubstantiation*, 12.

¹¹¹ Vickers, *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist*, 43.

In the Eucharist we receive the divine Bridegroom of our souls in the most intimate union, for we take Him into us as our spiritual nourishment and repast. However, instead of changing our divine food into ourselves, as we do with other food, here we become gradually transformed into the likeness of our Spouse. The Eucharist is a consummation of union with our divine Bridegroom perfectly fitting to our present state of trial, for it is a union that we recognize entirely by faith, a union that we cannot grasp with our external senses. It is a union with Christ that we believe because it was taught to us and enjoined by the Word of Truth... As the conjugal act is both unitive and procreative, so the Eucharist is said to have these two meanings.¹¹²

St. Pope John Paul II in what is probably his greatest theological work, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, echoes this same “conjugal love” theme in the section entitled, *The Sacredness of the Human Body and Marriage*, taken from Ephesians 5:21-33. According to John Paul II, this entire passage examines the experience of Christ’s Bridegroom redemptive love, care, welfare, sustenance, and nourishment for the Church-Bride expressed in marriage between a husband and wife and having a profound reference to the Eucharist:

The Church, as bride, being the object of the redemptive love of Christ-Bridegroom, becomes his Body. Being the object of the spousal love of the husband, the wife [i.e. the Church] becomes ‘one flesh’ with him, in a certain sense, his own flesh... In the union through love the body of the other becomes one’s own in the sense that one cares for the welfare of the other’s body as he does for his own. The expressions which refer to the care of the body, and in the first place to its nourishment, to its’ sustenance, suggest to many Scripture scholars a reference to the Eucharist with which Christ in his spousal love nourishes the Church.¹¹³

We are dramatically and drastically changed by the Eucharist as we are conformed more and more into the likeness of our spouse through this intimate union. “We need Christ in our hearts; we need the kingdom of God within us. Most of all, we

¹¹² Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 28.

¹¹³ Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1997), 318–321.

need Christ abiding in us through the Eucharist.”¹¹⁴ Thus, the importance of regular reception of the Eucharist is paramount in our Christian pilgrimage throughout this life.

Jim McManus in his book, *The Healing Power of the Sacraments*;¹¹⁵ and Vinny Flynn’s book, *7 Secrets of the Eucharist* emphasize and encourage daily Eucharist.¹¹⁶

Many protestants see the importance as well, such as Bill and Beni Johnson, senior pastors of Bethel Church in Redding, California who understand and teach on the importance of daily communion for healing.¹¹⁷ Stephanie Gretzinger, singer and song writer, talks candidly of the importance of receiving communion daily.¹¹⁸ Joseph Prince, a Christian evangelist echoes these same sentiments.¹¹⁹ Randy Clark believes we should expect healing to happen in communion.¹²⁰ Furthermore, he believes that frequent participation in communion is a way of maintaining grace and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ John H. Hampsch, *The Healing Power of the Eucharist* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1999), 118.

¹¹⁵ Jim McManus, *Healing Power of the Sacraments* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984), 73–84.

¹¹⁶ Vinny Flynn, *The 7 Secrets of the Eucharist* (Stockbridge, MA: Mercy Song, 2007), 99.

¹¹⁷ Beni Johnson and Bill Johnson, *The Power of Communion: Accessing Miracles Through the Body and Blood of Jesus* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2019), 158–159.

¹¹⁸ *Part 1: Steffany’s Heart Behind The Album & This Season (Instagram Live)*, 2020, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xn81JfvmtDw>.

¹¹⁹ Joseph Prince, *Eat Your Way to Life and Health: Unlock the Power of the Holy Communion* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 7.

¹²⁰ Randy Clark, *Healing Is in the Atonement - The Power of the Lord’s Supper* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2012), 51.

¹²¹ Clark, *The Power of the Lord’s Supper*, 39.

St. Augustine encouraged daily Eucharist,¹²² and Alexander Schmemann encourages daily Eucharist as it gives each person an opportunity to establish a rhythm.¹²³ There is a rhythm in heaven that is very different than the rhythm on earth. Even the liturgical calendar exposes the difference. The liturgical calendar new year begins with the first Sunday of Advent in late November or early December. The Church rhythm begins with joyfully anticipating the Incarnation. The Eucharist is a megaphone of God's love for us because of the Incarnation.

Christians are to be heavenly minded not earthly minded. Daily Eucharist reminds us tangibly of a reality and worldview completely above and beyond earth's perspective of reality.¹²⁴ This is the way to understand John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail."¹²⁵ According to John D. Zizoulas, the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 is pointing to the Eucharist.¹²⁶ The Eucharist does not produce its full effect in one single occasion, but by constant reception throughout life, what is created is a fervor in

¹²² O'Connor, *The Hidden Manna*, 50.

¹²³ Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Pr., 1966), 199.

¹²⁴ Mike Aquilina, *The Eucharist Foretold: The Lost Prophecy of Malachi* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2019), 47. St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus stated that Malachi 1:11 is the fulfillment of the Eucharist. cf. Psalm 141:2.

¹²⁵ Hoping, *My Body Given for You*, 55. Hoping elaborates on this in the following: The Eucharistic food is not an automatic process that brings about union with Christ. Only by receiving the Eucharistic gifts in faith is a lasting union bestowed. Mere non-sacramental eating is useless. This is how we are to understand John 6:63.

¹²⁶ John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 55.

the soul for greater union with Christ and an inflamed increased desire and readiness for continual renewal.¹²⁷

Andrew Wilson insightfully quips how the sacrament of the Eucharist is biblically commanded, historically warranted, cross-culturally wise, evangelistically significant, and pastorally helpful. The liturgy is the most powerful corporate discipleship tool we have available: praying, singing, listening, communion and fellowship all done together. The Eucharist is repetitive and not innovative and unashamedly physical.¹²⁸ Michael McNichols reflects on how the Eucharist reminds him of who he is through things auditory, visual, tactile and relational:

When I pay attention to what is going on, I start remembering Jesus and I am then remembered. I remember with my mind, but I am re-membered by Jesus, drawn back into the reality that I am a member of his body, not by certification or qualification, but because he has summoned me into his life.¹²⁹

Michael White and Tom Corcoran echo this sentiment by reminding us that the Church is formed and grows through the Eucharist.¹³⁰ These are just a few of the benefits to be gleaned from receiving the Eucharist.

Conclusion and Final Project

In this paper, I set out to situate sacramental theology as an integral part of God's economy of salvation that flows directly out of the Incarnation to establish a pattern of

¹²⁷ Salkeld and Root, *Transubstantiation*, 83.

¹²⁸ Andrew Wilson and Matt Chandler, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 70–72.

¹²⁹ Michael McNichols and Richard J. Mouw, *Shadow Meal: Reflections on Eucharist*, 2010, 39.

¹³⁰ Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 92.

doctrinal development. The Eucharist is not a peripheral symbolic ritual to be marginalized but is central to the liturgy. In support I gave an overview of some of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church from the Patristic period, followed by considering several theological terms pertinent to the discussion of the Eucharist to establish a connection to Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, not as something new, invented or contrived. I ended by looking at several benefits from regular reception of the Eucharist.

My historical foundations paper was on St. Catherine of Siena, Christian mystic and Doctor of the Church who had a passionate love for the Eucharist.

My biblical foundations paper was on Luke 22:14-20 and a focus throughout was Jesus's intense longing and passionate love for us in the Eucharist: "I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

This theological foundations paper (along with the two previous papers) relate to my Doctor of Ministry project of healing in the Eucharist as being an instructional resource by preparing participants what to anticipate. The conative thrust of the project will ask participants to receive the Eucharist over a specific period as I outlined in my Project Proposal. The Inter-Disciplinary paper will crystallize this further by targeting the healing process possible in regular reception of the Eucharist.

Postscript

I began this paper by recalling my personal anecdotal experiences with Christ in the Eucharist. I don't know what theological concept best captures what I experienced

and what I continue to experience: transubstantiation¹³¹, substantial conversion, mystery.

It is still a scandal to many that Christ might be fully present sacramentally in the Eucharist. (“This is a hard saying, who can understand it?” cf. John 6:60-64, Matthew 11:6.)¹³²

I am reminded of the quote by C.S. Lewis, “The command after all, was, Take, eat; not Take, understand,”¹³³ which is reminiscent of St. John of Damascus and St. Augustine quoted earlier. In seeking truth, we must remember, in the end, that all knowledge we acquire is based on trust and personal experience.¹³⁴ Theology is nothing more than a reflection upon Christian revelation considering our personal and corporate experience.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 283-285. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*: New Edition, 2nd edition. (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1993), 283-285. I find myself very comfortable with the Orthodox position: “...the Orthodox Church believes that after the consecration of the bread and wine become in very truth the Body and Blood of Christ; they are not mere symbols, but the reality. But while Orthodoxy has always insisted on the reality of the change, it has never attempted to explain the manner of the change...The word transubstantiation is not to be taken to define the manner in which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord; for this none can understand but God; but only this much is signified, that the bread truly, really, and substantially becomes the very true Body of the Lord, and the wine the very Blood of the Lord.” Sacred Scriptures, the ecumenical tradition and my experience attest to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

¹³² Rejection of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist has been challenged by it being only a symbol, a memorial, and by it being referred to as receptionism, impanation, consubstantiation, sacramental union, transignification, transfinalization. Others have proposed these questions: Does the Eucharist change back to bread when lost? What happens if a sinner receives the host? What about a mouse who eats the host? Does it receive Jesus? Yikes!

¹³³ C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1964), 104.

¹³⁴ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 7.

¹³⁵ Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1999), 33. Note: The book I took this quote from has a different ISBN# 0-88419-217-2.

I wholeheartedly agree with J.R.R. Tolkien and Flannery O'Connor as they reflect on their belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.¹³⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien, in a letter to his son Michael, wrote an unforgettable passage on the tremendous consolation given to him by the Eucharist:

Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament... There you will find romance, glory, honor, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves on earth, and more than that: Death. By the divine paradox, that which ends life, and demands the surrender of all, and yet by the taste – or foretaste – of which alone can what you seek in your earthly relationships (love, faithfulness, joy) be maintained, or take on that complexion of reality, of eternal endurance, which every man's heart desires.¹³⁷

Flannery O'Connor's belief is as heartfelt as well. To appreciate more of what she had to say (about the scandal of the Mystery) it is of necessity to give some theological background to her reflection: "to say that the Eucharist is symbolic of Christ's body and blood or of their very presence, is sometimes taken to mean simply that it is a token of our joy at being redeemed by Christ or loved by God... Perhaps it was this degenerate, purely subjective understanding of the Eucharist as a symbol that provoked Flannery O'Connor memorably to say, 'Well, if its' a symbol, to hell with it.'"

In one of her letters, she recalled a visit she made to another well-known author and former Catholic. This latter, said that when she was a child and received the Host, she thought of it as the Holy Ghost, he being the 'most portable' Person of the Trinity; now she thought of it as a symbol and implied that it was a pretty good one. I then said, in a very shaky voice, Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it. That was all the defense I was capable of, but I realize now that this is all I will

¹³⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, Christopher Tolkien, and Humphrey Carpenter, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 1st edition. (Boston: Mariner Books, 2000), 48–54.

¹³⁷ The Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration, *Manual for Eucharistic Adoration*, ed. Paul Thigpen (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books Publishers, Inc., 2016), 119.

ever be able to say about it, outside of a story, except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable.¹³⁸

I have a high sacramental view of the Eucharist. I believe Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. It is the only real food that lasts forever. It is the only food that does not change into us: we are transformed into Christ present in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is all about encountering Christ and not about the performance of a ritual.

As a charismatic priest, it is one of the most charismatic things I am involved in nearly every day. I know that the Eucharist is a miracle that happens every time. And every time I stand in awe.

¹³⁸ O'Connor, *The Hidden Manna*, 95.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In April of 2019, I was attending the Intensive for the Doctor of Ministry Program in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Immediately following this was a conference entitled The Voice of the Prophets. The key-note speaker was Dr. Carolyn Leaf, who is a communication pathologist and cognitive neuroscientist with a Master of Arts and PhD in Communication Pathology and a BSc Logopaedics, specializing in cognitive and metacognitive neuropsychology. On two different occasions during the conference, she spoke on neuroplasticity. I was completely unfamiliar with this subject but became thoroughly intrigued with what she taught, so much so that I purchased all of her books. I began reading and studying her work, as well as the works of others.

In August of 2019, in Dayton, Ohio at United Theological Seminary, while attending the next intensive for the Doctor of Ministry Program, we had a class taught by Dr. Peter Bellini on Interdisciplinary studies. We were instructed to converse with him about our Doctor of Ministry project and possible topic for the Interdisciplinary Foundations paper. I explained my project, Healing and Transformation through regular reception of the Eucharist, and the possible interdisciplinary topic as being neuroplasticity. He strongly encouraged me to pursue this stating that it would be a

perfect fit. He suggested some approaches to take and talked of his familiarity with this subject.

At the outset, I must confess that I have no professional background or training in either medicine or science. (I have never even played a doctor on television.) I am truly a lay person and amateur in these fields and will be relying totally on the experts. With that being said, this paper will interweave the historical context, definition, and explanation of neuroplasticity, including how it works.

As an interlude, I will also include a brief segue into how neuroplasticity, within the realm of cognitive neuroscience, causes a real challenge to the abuse, overuse, and ineffectiveness of many pharmaceutical prescription medications made available to treat emotional and psychological symptoms. In addition, I will present a snapshot perspective from a professional in the field of neuroplasticity who proffers a challenge to the effectiveness of neuroplasticity.

Following this is a return to neuroplasticity; the focus will be narrowed by looking at a specific theory. The theory I will be using is called the Geodesic Information Theory. This theory deals with the science of thought.¹ It describes how human persons think, choose, and build thoughts chronicling how this impacts our brains and behaviors. Coinciding with this theory, as stipulated by the rubric for this paper, a specific scientific model must be employed. The model I chose is primarily one of Integration; I chose this because Integration fosters the interplay of how science and religion can learn from one

¹ Caroline Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 131.

another and work together.² Thus, the Geodesic Information Theory and Integration will interface well with my project. I will also include several disciplines within the ancient Christian framework. These examples will by no means be exhaustive, but purposeful in demonstrating how spiritual disciplines can be integrated into the concepts of neuroplasticity.

Lastly, will be to examine how this interdisciplinary paper addresses the biblical, historical, and theological foundation papers nuancing further my proposed hypothesis, solution and outcome via healing and transformation experienced from regular reception of the Eucharist within a qualitative study.

Neuroplasticity: Definition and History

Neuroplasticity, by definition, means the brain is malleable and adaptable, changing moment by moment every day.³ Obviously, therefore, neuroplasticity deals with the brain, and overlaps into both science and medicine. It falls within the domain of cognitive neuroscience and was unleashed because of quantum physics:

This way of approaching cognitive neuroscience is in accordance with quantum physics. Not only do we direct our behavioral, emotional and intellectual changes

² Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* (HarperOne, 2013), 179. The scientific model proposes four perspectives: Conflict, Independence, Dialogue and Integration. They are defined as follows: 1.) Conflict - that science and religion are enemies; 2.) Independence - that science and religion are strangers to one another and can only coexist providing they keep a safe distance from one another; 3.) Dialogue - that science and religion can discuss comparisons and differences within the methods while respecting the integrity of one another; and, 4.) Integration - that science and religion can move beyond dialogue to explore how they might learn from one another and work together. I don't agree with Barbour on his affinity for Process Theology, but I do agree with him where he says, "that Dialogue and Integration are more promising ways to bring scientific and religious insights together than either Conflict or Independence."

³ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 22.

but we also create structural change in our brains and bodies as a result of our individualistic and complex thinking processes.⁴

Historically, science and medicine had always believed that the brain was a fixed and hardwired machine.⁵ This accepted belief was buttressed and enhanced by classical physics which had become established upon the foundation of Newtonian and Cartesian standards determined by unchangeable and predictable laws.⁶ In this paradigm, the unquestioned opinion was that brain damage was irreversible, untreatable, incurable, and hopeless. This diagnosis and prognosis encompassed limitations incurred from strokes, cardiovascular complications, learning disabilities, obsessive compulsive disorders, depression, anxiety, traumas from abuse, abandonment, or PTSD, and even aging.⁷ The medical and scientific prognostication lent itself to compensation and not restoration. The conventional wisdom was uncompromisingly emphatic declaring that brain normality for persons who had mental limitations or brain damage was unattainable and, quite frankly, impossible.

As Norman Doidge wrote:

...the mainstream view of the brain was that it could not change; scientists thought the brain was like a glorious machine, with parts, each of which performed a single mental function, in a single location in the brain. If a location is damaged – by a stroke or an injury or a disease – it could not be fixed because machines cannot repair themselves or grow new parts. Scientists also believed the circuits of the brain were unchangeable or “hardwired,” meaning that people born with mental limitations or learning disorders were in all cases determined to

⁴ Caroline Leaf, *The Perfect You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 26.

⁵ Lynne Malcolm, “Neuroplasticity: How the Brain Can Heal Itself,” Current, *Neuroplasticity: How the Brain Can Heal Itself*, 2, last modified 2015, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/neuroplasticity-and-how-the-brain-can-heal-itself/6406736>.

⁶ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 120.

⁷ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 19.

remain so. As the machine metaphor evolved, scientists took to describing the brain as a computer and its structure as “hardware” and believed the only change that aging hardware undergoes is that it degenerates with use. A machine wears out, use it or lose it. Thus, attempts by older people to preserve their brains from decline by using mental activity and exercise were seen as a waste of time.⁸

Does this downward spiral trajectory that Doidge chronicles engender an existential *angst* of despair of hopelessness for victims of brain maladies from strokes, injuries, or diseases of the brain? In this scenario, would persons feel stuck in a quagmire of quicksand where their handicapped new normal would enslave them into a compensation that would have them slowly sink away into emptiness and meaninglessness because the “hardware” of their brain would wear out? Would this impact an understanding of free will be due to the irreversible victimization caused by circumstances beyond ones’ control? If this type of questioning harbors truth, then learning to cope would be the highlight of the day, augmented by a cocktail of medications. And to make matters worse, in this scientific/medical model, the treatment would be geared towards the symptoms and not the person. If this effusive diatribe seems profusely overstated, I am simply reacting to what I have researched.

Then suddenly modern physics shows up and discovers the quantum world: there is the sensory world of our five senses, there is the world of electromagnetism and the atom, and then there is the deeper quantum world that is fundamental to the other worlds.⁹

David Keys gives an illustration that I find helpful. He explains:

⁸ Norman Doidge, *The Brain’s Way of Healing: Remarkable Discoveries and Recoveries from the Frontiers of Neuroplasticity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016), xiv.

⁹ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 104.

We think that a tabletop is solid, but it is not solid, as our classical minds think. It is really a big void, as 99.9% of the tabletop is empty space, with atoms positioned here and there. When we consider that the protons and neutrons are actually composed of subatomic particles, some of which have no radius, we see how really big that void is. The only reason the lamp on the table doesn't fall through the table is because of electric fields generated by the charged particles within both the lamp and the table... we have an invisible, mass-less thing we call an electric field, which extends out to infinity and which keeps other molecules out. Doesn't sound rational when we think about it, because the table looks solid to us.¹⁰

This is difficult to apprehend through our five senses even though it is truly happening. The word quantum means energy, and there are five main ideas postulated in presenting quantum theory: 1.) energy is not a continuous stream but comes in small, discrete units; 2.) the basic units behave both like particles and waves; 3.) the movement of particles is random; 4.) it is physically impossible to know both the position and the momentum of particle at the same time; and, 5.) the atomic world is nothing like the world we live in.¹¹

This random and unpredictable nature of quantum physics is called the Heisenberg uncertainty principle.¹² This is a nightmare for classical physics as it challenges the perception of linear time, orderly space, fixed realities and can no longer

¹⁰ Keys, *Exploring the Belief in the Real Presence*, 9.

¹¹ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 120.

¹² Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 121.

legitimize the view of human beings as being cogs with exchangeable parts in a huge hardwired mechanical machine.¹³

The optimal definition of quantum physics comes from Niels Bohr of Copenhagen University in 1927, which was considered the “granddaddy” of definitions.

It states that:

...the free choices made by human beings are a subjectively controllable variable, which simply means that you control your choices. Quantum mechanics ‘can be sued’ to prove that thinking and choosing are real and measurable. Thus, the way you experience your feelings, the way you interface with your thoughts, and the kind of attention you give them will change how your brain functions.¹⁴

We can now dive back into neuroplasticity. Remember the earlier definition: neuroplasticity means the brain is malleable and adaptable, changing moment by moment every day.¹⁵ Thus, the brain is plastic. That is why it is malleable and adaptable. This phenomenon is one of the most important developments in modern science for understanding the brain.¹⁶ The brain is constantly adapting and rewiring itself. As human beings then, we can change the nature of our brain through thinking and choosing.¹⁷

¹³ Professor Richard Wolfson, *Physics in Your Life* (The Great Courses Teaching Company, 2008), 5-6. Classical physics refers to the understanding of physical reality developed before 1900. Classical physics comprises several subfields: (1) Mechanics, which is the study of motion developed by Isaac Newton some 300 years ago; (2) Electromagnetism which encompasses electricity and magnetism; (3) Optics which is the study of light and its behavior and is a branch of electromagnetism; (4) Thermodynamics which is the study of heat and related phenomena. Although classical physics does an excellent job describing many everyday phenomena, classical physics breaks down in three realms: the very small, the very fast, and where gravity is very strong. These realms demand new descriptions of physical reality which were developed early in the 20th century.

¹⁴ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 107.

¹⁵ Courtney E. Ackerman, “What Is Neuroplasticity?” (2020): 2.

¹⁶ Malcolm, “Neuroplasticity,” 2.

¹⁷ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 121.

By consciously directing our thinking we can rewire out toxic patterns of thinking and replace them with healthy thoughts.¹⁸ This helps to explain Canadian psychologist Donald Hebb's famous saying that "neurons that fire together, wire together."¹⁹ This repetition creates neural pathways. The decisions you make today become part of the thought networks in your brain.²⁰ Thus, when we think about something enough, we carve out a new road.²¹ This new road can increase intelligence, bring healing to our minds and physical healing to our bodies. This is incredible: the brain has renewable characteristics. This renewable characteristic is defined as neurogenesis: the birthing of new nerve cells.²² However, as Bessel Van Der Kolk posits, this can be a double-edged sword:

When a circuit fires repeatedly, it can become a default setting – the response most likely to occur. If you feel safe and loved, your brain becomes specialized in exploration, play, and cooperation. If you are frightened and unwanted, it specializes in managing feelings of fear and abandonment.²³

We have the unique opportunity to evaluate our thoughts and their impact upon us because we are responsible for what we choose to think about and dwell on, and we make

¹⁸ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 20. Dr. Leaf also explains how the scientific power of our mind to change is called epigenetics. The way the brain changes as a result of mental activity is scientifically called neuroplasticity. At its most basic level, epigenetics, or neuroplasticity, is the fact that your thoughts and choices impact your physical brain and body, your mental health, and your spiritual development. Consider the following Scripture passages: Proverbs 3:7-8, 23:7, Romans 12:2, Deuteronomy 30:19, Psalm 34:11-16.

¹⁹ Ackerman, "What Is Neuroplasticity?" 21.

²⁰ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 57.

²¹ Healing Trauma Center, "Neuroplasticity and Rewiring the Brain," n.d., 4, <https://healingtraumacenter.com/neuroplasticity-and-rewiring-the-brain/>.

²² Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 24.

²³ Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015), 56. Dr. Leaf expounds on this: neuroplasticity (the ability of the brain to change in response to thinking) can operate for you as well against you because whatever you think about the most will grow. This applies to both the positive and negative end of the spectrum. (cf. page 70.).

these decisions in the privacy of our own thinking.²⁴ The brain, therefore, does not control the mind. The mind controls the brain. Our thinking and choosing affects how chemicals and protein's function and even changes our DNA.²⁵ This is incredulous to me, to apprehend that our thinking unzips our DNA.²⁶ So our minds not only control matter, but they also change it.²⁷ They become a creative force.²⁸ Thus, neuroplasticity is the ability of our brains to change in response to our thinking.²⁹

²⁴ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 45.

²⁵ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 35. Research shows that thinking and feeling anger, fear and frustration caused the DNA to change shape according to thoughts and feelings. The DNA responded by tightening up and becoming shorter, switching off many DNA codes, which reduced quality expression. This research and study show that people shut down by negative emotions and this affects the body as well. On pages 47-48 Dr. Leaf explains this process further: DNA, neurotransmitters, proteins and energy create a signal, and this signal passes through membranes of the cell, travels to the cell's nucleus, and enters the chromosome, activating the strand of DNA. The DNA is zipped up, almost as though it is in a cocoon, until it is activated or unzipped by the signal. When the DNA is zipped up, it is in a dormant or inert state. This cocoon protects the DNA from the rest of the intracellular environment while in this inert state. Thus, the zipped-up DNA must be opened so that the appropriate genetic code needed to build the protein can be read. As it is opened and the code is read RNA (which is a type of protein that almost acts like a photocopier) makes a photocopy of the code, which serves as a guide or architectural plan to build the proteins within the machinery inside the cell. This is called genetic expression. And these proteins the person has caused to be built hold the information they have just read as a thought or a memory. The point of explaining all this, is that a substance has just been created through this process.

²⁶ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 51. Dr. Leaf reminds us how we have been living under a myth called the gene myth, which locates ultimate power over health and mental well-being in the uncontrollable realm of genes, relegating them to the level of gods. This myth has bound the mental and physical health as well as the peace and happiness of too many people for too long. Genes may create an environment within us in which a problem may grow, a predisposition, but they do not produce the problem, we do produce it through our choices. This type of thinking removes choice and accountability from the equation and is scientifically and spiritually inaccurate. Each of us control our genes; our genes do not control us. Granted, genes may determine physical characteristics but not psychological phenomena. On the contrary, our genes are constantly being remolded in response to life experiences.

²⁷ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 105. As human beings, we are freethinking agents whose conscious choices actually impact and change the physical world. This is called the Observer Effect. The Observer determines the precise direction in which a myriad of possibilites may collapse. In the quantum universe, we as observers affect phenomena, space, and time because we turn possibilites into realities.

The Segue

Having provided a brief history, definition, and description of neuroplasticity and its challenge to classical physics, this is the appropriate time to segue into how it also presents a challenge to the conventional wisdom regarding the use of pharmaceutical medications.

I discovered several books that detail a scathing rebuke to the overuse and ineffectiveness of many pharmaceutical medications used to treat emotional and psychological issues such as depression, anxiety disorders, learning disabilities, as well as the treatment for stroke victims and brain injuries. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. These books are *Deadly Medicines and Organized Crime: How Big Pharma Has Corrupted Healthcare*, by Peter C. Gotzsche, *Pharmageddon*, by David Healy, and *Your Drug May Be Your Problem: How and Why to Stop Taking Psychiatric Medications*, by Peter R. Breggin and David Cohen.

To begin with, drugs are the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer.³⁰ Secondly, the marketing of these drugs is a multi-billion-dollar industry with all

²⁸ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 121. Our thoughts, imagination, and choices can change the structure and function of our brains on every level: molecular, genetic, epigenetic, cellular, structural, neurochemical, and electromagnetic, and even subatomic. Through our thoughts, we can be our own brain surgeons as we make choices that change the circuits in our brain. God has designed us to do our own brain surgery. In addition to this, my perception of the environment, and how I manage my environment, can control my body and my life. Thus, if I change my perception, I can change my biology. I can become the master of my life instead of being or becoming a victim.

²⁹ Shad Helmstetter, *The Power of Neuroplasticity* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Park Avenue Press, 2014), 11.

³⁰ Peter Gotzsche, *Deadly Medicines and Organised Crime* (New York, NY: Radcliffe Publishing, 2013), 1.

too often the promised effects undeliverable.³¹ Thirdly, in many cases these drugs are unwarranted and heavily over prescribed.³² The data and research these authors present as experts in their fields is daunting.

As Breggin and Cohen write:

Emotional suffering is inevitable in life. But it has meaning – a purpose. Suffering is a signal that life matters. Specifically, it is usually a signal that something in our lives that matters a great deal needs to be addressed. Depression, guilt, anxiety, shame, chronic anger, emotional numbing – all these reactions signal that something is amiss and requires attention. The depth of suffering is a sign of the soul's desire for a better more creative, principled life...but our emotional and spiritual problems are not only often seen as psychiatric disorders, they are declared to be biological and genetic in origin... These days, your doctor is likely to suggest medication for relatively mild degrees of emotional upset or distress; even a few weeks of moderate sadness or anxiety are apt to lead to a prescription. If your child has been difficult to deal with for a few weeks at home or in school, that, too, is likely to bring out the prescription pad. The problem may have lasted for only a short period, but the drug treatment may go on for years or even for a lifetime... Do we know what we are doing to our brains and minds when we take psychiatric drugs? Do we know what we are doing to our children when we give them these substances?³³

Then they quip rather sarcastically,

Feeling fatigued? Take Prozac. Feeling as though you've lost enthusiasm or direction? Take Paxil or Zoloft, especially if Prozac hasn't worked. Feeling trapped in an abusive relationship? Take Effexor, Luvox or Lithium. Feeling a little nervous? Take Xanax, Klonopin, or Ativan. Having trouble disciplining your child? Give the child Ritalin, or Dexedrine, or Adderall. Having trouble focusing on work that bores you? Try Ritalin yourself. Having ups and downs of any kind? Take any number of psychiatric drugs.³⁴

³¹ David Healy, *Pharmageddon* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 21 and 161.

³² Peter Breggin and David Cohen, *Your Drug May Be Your Problem, Revised Edition: How and Why to Stop Taking Psychiatric Medications* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2007), 21 and 161.

³³ Healy, *Pharmageddon*, 21-22.

³⁴ . Several other books to peruse: Klonopin Withdrawl & Howling Dogs: Maybe it was God, by Audrey Wagner; Overcoming Klonopin Withdrawl, by Daniel Sneedon; The Benzo Devil: How I Recovered From Prescription Drugs, by R.W. Pharazyn.

Without further ado pertaining to this segue, the following, as previously mentioned in the introduction, is a brief snapshot of one professional's caution.

Snapshot

Neuroplasticity may not be a cure all; in some instances, as Moheb Costandi contends in his book, *Neuroplasticity*, it has become a buzzword used by motivational speakers and self-help gurus to scam desperate people and make a profit. Yet even Costandi sees the inestimable value of neuroplasticity when understood and implemented properly.³⁵ How could anyone choose medication with potential adverse physiological and psychological side effects over thinking properly? It appears to me be a ‘no-brainer.’

Geodesic Information Theory

The next portion of this paper will be to consider the Geodesic Information Theory heralded by Dr. Leaf as a hands-on practical way of concretely implementing neuroplasticity from a Christian ethos and pathos. I chose her approach over others who also champion neuroplasticity because of her affinity for Christianity.³⁶

³⁵ Moheb Costandi, *Neuroplasticity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 4. Costandi supports neuroplasticity. His concern is how entrepreneurs have seized upon the opportunity to see it as a treasure trove for making money. He gives the example of brain training through computer games which he contends simply do not work. He sees this as an example of a marketing strategy that has become a multi-million-dollar industry.

³⁶ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 124. Dr. Leaf explains how she spent many years trying to understand science in terms of the truths of Scripture. The other approaches I reviewed were either more syncretic (e.g. combining yoga, martial arts, and eastern forms of meditation such as Buddhism with Christianity) or avoided Christianity altogether.

To begin with, Dr. Leaf exquisitely slays numerous learning myths such as left-right brain theory, preferred learning style theory, computer-based memory training programs, and brain games, to mention just a few. Her definition of a myth and a neuromyth is:

A myth satisfies the desire for quick, unequivocal, and simple explanations, and has the potential for the genesis of false ideas and faulty interpretations, which are used and abused by mass media, whose influence in forming and perpetuating opinion is critical...But what are ‘neuromyths’ specifically? They are common and damaging misconceptions about the nature of brain research, which relate to and shape our understanding of learning, education, work, science, and life.³⁷

She warns consumers of these quick fixes and unproven learning theories that gathering information “like puzzle pieces without putting the puzzle together, intellectual growth is stifled. This is a crisis of quantity over quality, and the consequences are frighteningly evident in society.”³⁸ She also disembowels the art of being able to multi-task.

This poor focusing of attention and lack of quality in our thought lives is the complete opposite of how the brain is designed to function and causes a level of brain damage. Every rapid, incomplete, and poor quality shift of thought is like making a milkshake with your brain cells and neurochemicals. This milkshake-multitasking, which is the truth behind multitasking, creates patterns of flightiness and lack of concentration that are unfortunately often erroneously labeled ADD and ADHD and that are too often unnecessarily medicated, adding fuel to the fire. And it’s a rapid downhill slide from there if we don’t get back to our God-design of deep, intellectual attention.³⁹

Thus, multi-tasking wreaks havoc on our ability to intentionally focus by making us less able to be attentive to our thought habits. This, then, makes us vulnerable to

³⁷ Caroline Leaf, Robert Turner, and Peter Amua-Quarsie, *Think, Learn, Succeed: Understanding and Using Your Mind to Thrive at School, the Workplace, and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 30–31.

³⁸ Leaf, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 28.

³⁹ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 94.

making shallow and weak perceptions, judgments and decisions resulting in a kind of passive mindlessness. Deep, intellectual thought, however, results in interactive mindfulness. This requires us to passionately engage with the world by increasing our awareness of our own thoughts and thought processes as well as taking time to understand and reflect on them.⁴⁰

Dr. Leaf, based on her research and experience, contends that each of us are masterpieces that God has meticulously and uniquely fashioned:

Research shows that as you think, you influence your genetic expression and build your distinctive interpretation into physical thoughts – thoughts that are different from everyone else's. You have been designed with a beautiful way of thinking, evident from infancy, that fits your remarkable and unequaled Perfect You.⁴¹

Thinking causes movement of information as energy from our minds throughout our nervous system. Each single thought has quantum energy and electrochemical and electromagnetic signals, which flow throughout our brains and bodies largely below our level of awareness in our nonconscious mind.⁴²

⁴⁰ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 97. One recent study found that being alone with one's thoughts is considered an unpleasant experience by the majority of people of all ages. cf. Timothy D. Wilson et al., "Which Would You Prefer - Do Nothing or Receive Electric Shocks?" *Science* 345, no. 6192 (2014): 75-77; Timothy D. Wilson et al., "Just Think: The Challenges of the Disengaged Mind," *Science* 345, no. 6192 (2014) 75-77; Martin Pielot et al., "When Attention Is Not Scarce - Detecting Boredom from Mobile Phone Usage," *Proceedings of the 2015 ACM International Joint Conference on Pervasive and Ubiquitous Computing*, 824-36; Paul Seli et al. "Mind Wandering with and without Intention," *Trends in Cognitive Science* 20, no. 8 (2016): 605-17; Russell B. Clayton, Glenn Leshner, and Anthony Almond, "The Extended iSelf: The Impact of iPhone Separation on Cognition, Emotions, and Physiology," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 20, no 2 (2015):119-35. Also, surveys have actually found that spending more time on social media and other "screen" activities correlates strongly with lower levels of happiness, higher feelings of loneliness and depression, and a greater risk of suicide. cf. Leaf, *Think Learn Succeed*, 46-7, 269.

⁴¹ Leaf, *The Perfect You*, 18.

⁴² Leaf, Turner, and Amua-Quarshie, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 38.

In her theory, the brain works in neurological pillars and multiple parallel circuits, which means there is a lot of interconnections among the networks of the brain. In her theory, it is our choices that make something out of nothing by collapsing the probabilities into actualities that define the state of metacognition: metacognitive to cognitive to symbolic.⁴³

She goes on to define her Geodesic Information theory as a global and comprehensive approach to thinking and learning, which has an all-encompassing quantum nature that still accounts for individuality.⁴⁴ Her theory deals with the science of thought, being therefore, a description of how we think, choose, and build thoughts that directly impact our brains and our behavior.

Dr. Leaf explains that how we think about things are our mindsets, and she names fifteen of them.⁴⁵ Because what we think about the most grows, mindsets are part of the process that sculpts our brains.⁴⁶ Mindsets are specific and ethereal or abstract; they are

⁴³ Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 134.

⁴⁴ Leaf, *The Perfect You*, 26. Dr. Leaf's theory works on three levels: (1) nonconscious metacognitive level where 90-99% of the action in the mind occurs as thinking and thought building happens and operates at roughly 400 billion actions per second and drives the cognitive level and is operating at 24 hours a day; (2) conscious cognitive level where about 10% of mind action occurs and operates at 2000 actions per second and drives the symbolic output level, which accounts for what one ways and does while they're awake; and, (3) symbolic output level which incorporates the five senses through which the person expresses themselves to the world and serves as the contact between the external world and the internal world of the mind. This three tiered model works as a perfect circle: First, the information comes in through the five senses; Second, this information is received consciously at the cognitive level; Third, where if the person has in fact paid attention to the information/thought, this then starts the process of thinking and choosing; Fourth, it then becomes a physical thought as a result of the appropriate genetic expression and begins to make proteins; and, Fifth, this newly built physical thought will, in turn, impact their conscious cognitive and symbolic levels. And the cycle of this perfect circle goes on. Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 125-131.

⁴⁵ Leaf, Turner, and Amua-Quarshie, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 43. Cultivating healthy, successful mindsets is the key ingredient to achieving a thriving lifestyle.

⁴⁶ Leaf, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 51.

not worldviews. Our mindsets become the target we are aiming at. They are also involved in the learning to capture, evaluate, and manage unwanted, intrusive thoughts.

Next, there are seven modules of thinking. She illustrates how these seven modules of thinking are like the different parts of our digestive system. She explains how research shows the specific areas of our brain function: thinking is a process and goes through a cycle, just like our digestion does.⁴⁷ Each person goes through a cycle of all seven modules as they build a thought, and each person has their own customized mode of thinking. Unlike the digestive system, not everyone's process of thinking is the same. Not all people start or finish with the same module, but everyone passes their thoughts through each of the seven.

The next step is to take the “gift profile” to see your personal unique customized way of thinking.⁴⁸ In other words, which of the seven modules do each of us individually begin with and which one of do you close with? As an aside it was fascinating, insightful, and helpful to see my personal sequential thought cycle.

The final step, as Dr. Leaf explains, is how to implement her plan that takes seven to sixteen minutes a day in a five-step process that one intentionally invests in for twenty-one days: (1) Gather, (2) Focused Reflection, (3) Write, (4) Revisit, (5) Active Reach.

Let her explain:

After a repeated thinking about the choice over two to three cycles of twenty-one days, the new thought moves into the nonconscious metacognitive level, where it becomes part of our internal perception. This process is called automatization and becomes part of your belief system, shaping and influencing your choices...

⁴⁷ Leaf, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 111. Dr. Leaf's seven modules are: Intrapersonal/Introspection, Interpersonal/Interaction, Linguistic/Word, Logical/Mathematical, Kinesthetic/Sensory, Musical/Intuition, and Visual/Spatial/Imagination.

⁴⁸ Leaf, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 128f.

Automatization applies to everything in my life, because everything I do and say is first a thought. This means nothing happens until I first build the thought, which is like root of a tree buried under the ground. The thought produces words, actions, behavior, and so on, which can be compared to the tree branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit you see above ground. The roots under the ground are like the nonconscious metacognitive mind that nourishes and supports the tree, keeping it alive twenty-four hours a day.⁴⁹

Dr. Leaf believes that faithfully following this plan will allow each of us to find our true self rather than our adapted self that has been influenced by our environment and circumstances.⁵⁰ And as Craig S. Keener argues, our true identity can only be found in Christ.⁵¹ I wholeheartedly agree.

Obviously, there is not space available to detail her mindsets, modules, profiles, and plan. In addition, there are aspects of her theory in, *Switch On Your Brain, The Perfect You, and Think, Learn, Succeed*, that were not included but which are pertinent to an in-depth apprehension of her theory.⁵² As an aside, Dr. Leaf also teaches on the

⁴⁹ Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain Workbook: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health*, Workbook edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 84.

⁵⁰ Leaf, Turner, and Amua-Quarshie, *Think, Learn, Succeed*, 138. Dr. Leaf admonishes about how each of us are directly responsible for what we choose to think about and dwell on, and we make these decisions in the privacy of our own thinking. As we think, it is important to make a distinction between who we truly are - the real me, multifaceted, unique me - and the person I have become through toxic choices.

⁵¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Baker Academic, 2016), 33. Keener says the following: "We humans need to identify ourselves in terms such as (naturally) our personal past, our family models, or our social embeddedness within external culture; parental models and others" views of us are among the influences that shape our identity formation. In his book about Paul, he shows how our strongest level of identification should be our identity as followers of Christ: embedded in a new community, a new relationship with God, and thinking as Christ would, being conformed to his image (cf. Romans 6:5; 8:29). For Paul, this new identity is not merely a cognitive strategy but an affirmation of a new reality."

⁵² Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, 126-127. Included in this are: multiple-perspective advantage, neuroplasticity paradox, default mode network, task positive network, quantum zeno effect, law of entanglement, observer effect, scientific reconceptualization, and mirror neurons.

importance of the practical aspects of everyday living pertaining to our diet, exercise, rest, work, and play.⁵³

Conclusion

Our free will greatly influences our thinking, which produces our state of mind; and far from explaining away free will, neuroscientific evidence explains how free will works in the metacognitive, cognitive, and symbolic levels.

If a person's nonconscious mind is filled with negative, toxic garbage, that is what informs his or her decisions on a day-to-day basis.⁵⁴ This means that a person will speak from toxicity. It is truly his/her choice, then, to either create healthy thought universes in his/her brain or turn powerless lies and misperceptions into toxic universes. And as Phillip Dow says: "Every time we decide to train and improve our minds is another dollar in the bank. Every time we decide to be lazy or flippant in our thinking, we are taking another dollar out."⁵⁵ Consider Mark 7:1-23 and Galatians 5:19-21.

But if, on the other hand, he/she chooses consciously and deliberately to direct his/her thinking, he/she can rewire out toxic patterns of thinking and replace them with

⁵³ Caroline Leaf, *Think and Eat Yourself Smart: A Neuroscientific Approach to a Sharper Mind and Healthier Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 13–14.

⁵⁴ Leanne Payne, *Restoring the Christian Soul: Overcoming Barriers to Completion in Christ through Healing Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 59. In this section of her book, she quotes Socrates and then gives an excellent explanation: "Socrates said, 'Most are misologists;' in other words, most people hate to think. Some people are very sick indeed because they hate to think and they are too passive and lazy to think through their problems with God. This is mental sloth and should be confessed as such."

⁵⁵ Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 23.

healthy thoughts.⁵⁶ Consider Deuteronomy 30:11-20, and Joshua 24:14-15. Thus, our minds can powerfully and unexpectedly change our brains in positive ways when we intentionally direct our attention. It changes the chemicals and proteins, and new thought networks begin to grow, increasing our intelligence and bringing healing to our minds, emotions, and bodies. Consider Proverbs 4:20-22 and III John 2.

Maybe I am incredibly naïve, but I believe with proper implementation of Dr. Leaf's scientific and medical Geodesic Information Processing Theory, which is thoroughly Christian, and is founded on neuroplasticity and quantum physics, we come to a picturesque example of integration and amalgamation of science and religion: taking every thought captive (II Corinthians 10:3-6), having a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2), dismissing anxiety and thinking of things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:4-8), passionately focused on God (Isaiah 26:3), knowing that I am a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17), knowing the life I now live in the flesh is in Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:20), knowing I am hidden in Christ and therefore, setting my mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2-3), knowing I am seated in heaven (Ephesians 2:10), knowing as Christ is so am I in this world (I John 4:17). All of this creates a harmonious and spectacular symphony and sweet-smelling aroma of beauty that I am invited to fully participate in, leaving me disbelieving for joy (Psalm 126:1-3 and Luke 24:41). The antithesis of this would be a chaotic cacophony in toxic thinking.

Dr. Leaf's theory, implemented over a 21-day cycle, will integrate well in my Doctor of Ministry project proposal of regular reception of the Eucharist bringing healing,

⁵⁶ J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 62. Moreland was quoting John Stott who had once said: "I'd want to say many things. But my main exhortation would be this: Don't neglect your critical faculties..."

deliverance, and transformation in a qualitative study. As Dr. Peter Bellini suggested, what needs to happen to track concrete specific, and measurable results, given my proposed hypothesis and solution, are clear expectations, instructions, teachings, questions, surveys, and interviews, which will occur over a 21-day period.

These four foundation papers will be like the legs of a chair one can sit on. The Biblical Foundations paper on Luke 22:14-20, will be a source of fostering questions and teachings on the Eucharist from a biblical perspective. The Historical Foundations paper on Catherine of Siena, is a testimony of her experience and understanding of the Eucharist creating expectations for healing and transformation. The Theological Foundations paper on the Eucharist, provides a plethora of approaches to explore with the participants: historically, sacramentally, and theologically. The Interdisciplinary Foundations paper will provide the tool for implementation. This last piece will be an integral part for the crystallization of the hypothesis and barometer for my project's success or failure.

Another rubric for this paper is ‘what new insights have I gained?’ To begin with, the debunking of learning myths and alarming awareness of the sophistic atmosphere surrounding pharmaceuticals and the consequent danger of mindless misology; a valid integration of science, medicine, and religion that is actual and not contrived; and the absolute necessity of honesty and integrity that fosters cognitive congruence that exposes, dismantles, and uproots cognitive dissonance. An example of the importance of congruence comes from the infamous Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias who developed ‘combinationalism.’ It states that every person has to at some point come to terms with the four following questions: (1) Origin (where am I from), (2) Purpose (why am I here),

(3) Meaning (how do I live), and, (4) Destiny (where am I going). The answer to these must necessarily be concise and congruent as they lead to defining a person's sense of identity.⁵⁷

Secondly, Dr. Leaf repeats over and over through all of her writing that we are wired for love, but we learn fear. Given this conjecture, what if we are also wired for belief but we learn doubt? What if fear and doubt build an infrastructure of performance and legalism that sets in motion isolationism, escapism, and spiritual paralysis? If that's true, then we can unlearn it. What if like Paul, we can learn to be content in all circumstances, learn to dismiss all anxiety, learn to take every thought captive, and learn our true identity in Christ.

Thirdly, in my limited acumen of both science and medicine, I understand like never before that the fallacious reasoning surrounding 'cessationism' is a house of cards that can be readily toppled scientifically by quantum physics.⁵⁸ This is incredulous to me. I am no longer limited by experience, testimony, and interpretation of Sacred Scripture exegetically and hermeneutically alone, in claiming the veracity of miracles, including the Eucharist.

Fourthly, is the inestimable value of the Christian disciplines.⁵⁹ Dr. Leaf's implementation of her Geodesic Information Processing Theory is actualized by deep

⁵⁷ Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Brentwood, TN: Baker Pub Group, 1993), 193.

⁵⁸ Jon Mark Ruthen's, What's Wrong With Protestant Theology, and On the Cessation of the Charismata; Bill Johnson and Randy Clark's, The Essential Guide to Healing; and, Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague's, Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries, all eviscerates and excoriates cessationism rendering it laughable.

⁵⁹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, Reprint Edition. (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1999), xi.

focused intentional thinking for just under twenty minutes a day for 21 days. The spiritual disciplines are central to experiential Christianity.⁶⁰ The purpose of them is to call us beyond surface living into the depths of intimacy with the Lord. They are designed to liberate persons from the stifling slavery of self-interest/preoccupation and fear to a metamorphosis of total transformation. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of negative thoughts to new life-giving habits found only in Christ. This is the core of Benedictine spirituality that began in the fifth century. And as Rod Dreher reflects in his book, *The Benedict Option*, “...tradition is not worship of ashes but the preservation of fire.”⁶¹ Another example of practicing spiritual disciplines for fifteen minutes at the end of the day is found in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola beginning in the sixteenth century, which by the way, was much of my formation with degrees from Creighton University and Gonzaga University, both of which are Jesuit.⁶² Timothy Gallagher gives an excellent explanation of St. Ignatius’s Examen Prayer that is to be done for fifteen minutes every day.⁶³ Leanne Payne, in her book, *Listening Prayer*, encourages the regular practice of the spiritual disciplines and presents a specific model

⁶⁰ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth Special 20th Anniversary Edition, 2000 Hardcover* (San Francisco, CA: Harper SanFrancisco, 2000), 2.

⁶¹ Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (Sentinel, 2017), 77. It is interesting to note that the call to prayer seven times a day, in fifteen minute intervals or so, was determined and measured by the ringing of church bells. Sadly, this connection has been lost or forgotten by many Christians today who are unaware of their shared heritage with the ancient Christian disciplines.

⁶² Dan Burke, *Spiritual Warfare and The Discernment of Spirits* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2020), 26–27.

⁶³ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*, 2006, 57–102.

for daily use that takes place at the end of day.⁶⁴ Orthodox spirituality also has a rich heritage of the Christian disciplines. It is referred to as “watchfulness.”⁶⁵ This is just a brief sampling, but little did I realize how the regular practicing of the spiritual disciplines in Christianity can in fact create brain matter.

Fifthly, the importance of daily declarations from the Scriptures and personal prophetic words. These daily declarations serve to reinforce the revelation, liberation, and covenant (or to say it another way: truth, freedom, love) that enables us to appropriate the fullness of our identity in Christ.⁶⁶

Sixthly, the capturing of intrusive thoughts by simply learning to manage them along with understanding our inability to control circumstances but our total ability to control our reactions.

And seventhly, the fact that each of us have a unique customized way of thinking. This is reminiscent of St. Catherine of Siena’s teaching on our acceptance that God draws each of us to Himself in a unique way fashioned just for us.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Leanne Payne, *Listening Prayer: Learning to Hear God’s Voice and Keep a Prayer Journal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 21–22.

⁶⁵ Esther E. Cunningham Williams and Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy* (Levadia Levadhi, Greece: Iera Moni Genethliou tis Theotokou, 2005), 228-229. The meaning of Orthodox watchfulness is: "as with all diseases of the soul and body, so also with thoughts there is preventive treatment as well as therapeutic treatment after the illness... The preventive work is to try not to let the thought enter and capture the nous. This is achieved by watchfulness, attentiveness and hesychia and cutting off evil thoughts... Watchfulness is also called guarding thoughts... This watchfulness of their soul, this guarding of thoughts is also called inner hesychia. Note “nous” means the mind, reason, or intellect specifically as a metaphysical principle; and “hesychia” means stillness from outward stimulation, but more importantly refers mainly to stillness of the heart.

⁶⁶ Rodney Hogue, Kris Vallotton, and Randy Clark, *Liberated: Set Free and Staying Free from Demonic Strongholds* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2019), 173–177.

⁶⁷ Catherine of Siena and Giuliana Cavallini, *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), 18.

Neuroplasticity has always been with us; we just did not know it. As I say often to my congregation: The Lord knows everything that you know, and He knows everything that you don't know, and He knows everything that you think you know even if He knows you don't really know it as much as you think. I knew nothing about neuroplasticity a year ago, and here I am seeing it actualized by such things as the spiritual disciplines. The truth is, we all can develop in-Christ, a balanced, sanguine, resilient, creative, brilliant mind.

If the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, then all who call themselves Christian has an invitation to share fully in the life and person of Christ by putting on the mind of Christ – Christ in us, the hope of glory for inner transformation and outward manifestation. What a magnificent concept to think about!

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The thread that runs through and connects the previous chapters has constructed a foundation of evidence supporting the efficacy, veracity, and strategy of the project that was implemented. This project on the Eucharist reflects my own spiritual and ministry journey that I have been on as a priest for thirty-five plus years and has been the culmination of all my study these past three years as well as a trajectory that has propelled my life and ministry.

The initial goal of the project was to determine the correlation between healing and receiving the Eucharist. However, a breakthrough into a place of intimacy was an unexpected revelatory experience that most of the participants had as well. This unexpected precious encounter reflects a deep longing within us for union with the Lord that puts our need for physical and emotional well-being in its proper perspective. The need for such healing was not diminished; but many of the participants priorities shifted to embrace the Lord's Presence in moments of profound intimacy upon receiving the Eucharist. Because of this development, my hypothesis is even more apropos than when I

first wrote it, even amidst the privilege of Ockham's Razor honing and tweaking it.¹

(Recall, that Ockham's Razor was the very first "kiss" dictum.)²

In the previous chapters we saw that Luke 22:14 exposes the emphatic imperative of Jesus's passionate and fervent desire to show how his implementation of the New Covenant in his Body and Blood was the key to understanding his suffering and crucifixion. It is what unlocked heaven for humanity. It is what opened the floodgates of heaven with a deluge of salvation, healing, transformation, and manifestation. This account of the Last Supper in Luke reveals the utter madness of Christ's love for us and the scandalous and ubiquitous generosity of the Father, in giving of his only Son for us.

The testimonies of Catherine of Siena and the heroes of our faith from the patristic era with their erudite theological insights have also served to deepen passion for greater experiential, intellectual, and spiritual understanding of this most sublime mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. The power of the testimony augmented with sound theological discourse has been paramount in preparing for this project and its ultimate implementation among the brethren I have been called to serve.

In my Spiritual Autobiography, Context Analysis, and Synergy papers I chronicled my journey from Protestantism (American Baptist) to Roman Catholicism to the Charismatic Episcopal Church. I discussed my priestly vocation beginning in 1985

¹ My hypothesis is that if individuals receive the Eucharist on a regular basis over a three-week period within the context of the daily and Sunday liturgical celebrations, they will then experience healing. This healing would entail a measurable change in the physical and emotional well-being of the person, which will be analyzed either through a medical diagnosis or a person's testimony of recognizable relief. This study is looking at the correlation between the frequency of healing and communion.

² Tom Morris, *Philosophy For Dummies* (Foster City, CA: IDG Books, 1999), 329. William of Ockham was a 14th-century Franciscan known as the "Invincible Doctor." His famous principle was, "do not multiply postulated entities without necessity." This principle has also been known as the original principle of simplicity, or parsimony. It is considered the very first "keep it simple, stupid," known of course as the 'kiss' principle.

and among the many opportunities afforded me, I have celebrated the Eucharist nearly every day for thirty-five years. I have had several profound “mystical” experiences upon receiving the Eucharist. I have witnessed others being profoundly affected and miraculously healed by the Eucharist. My love and reverence for the Eucharist has never diminished but only increased over the years. I feel singularly privileged to have been able to implement this Doctor of Ministry project in this specific context amidst the rich ethnic and demographic diversity in which it occurred.

What is to follow is a description of the methodology and implementation of the project and a summary of what was learned from it. I conclude with thoughts on where we go from here.

Methodology

When comparing a method and a system, a method tends to be more general whereas a system is more specific. I will briefly describe the method I used that seemed best to fit the project I was exploring. A methodology is like an overlay on a project. This means that the project is not designed to adapt to the method, but rather the method helps us see the project from different vantage points. It helps illustrate and facilitate clarity as to how the project was constructed. Among different methodologies to have used, it is important to find the one that best suits the project under investigation.

The research methodology that I selected for my final project was a phenomenological qualitative study. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon for several individuals. In this type of study, the researcher reduces the experiences to a central meaning or the “essence” of the experience. It is also

qualitative research, which is an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a problem.³ The phenomenon is the central concept being examined by the phenomenologist and it is the concept being experienced by subjects in a study while in their natural setting.⁴ This “phenomenon” or “concept” for this project being studied are the participants who received the Eucharist. The methodology used, objectively speaking, is for the purpose of describing, in less detail than what a system would, how the study was done.⁵ My intent was to discover and illuminate the lived experience of those who participated.⁶ That is why this method was chosen.

Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their personal views.⁷ This gives the interviewee a sense of being in control of the interview and not being coerced or manipulated. The goal is for them to not be constrained by being put into a position where they feel that a specific response is being pursued. This freedom from constraint and manipulation is important because their personal experience has a sacredness about it. If this freedom is not offered, the information is compromised, and the process is unnecessarily sabotaged. It is also important that participants know that they are not being compared to others engaged in

³John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th edition. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2017), 235.

⁴ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 235.

⁵ Carol Roberts and Laura Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2018), 28.

⁶ Roberts and Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey*, 148.

⁷ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2018), 9.

this project. This proper use of open-ended questions protects the participants because it respects and guards their freedom. They can say or not say anything of their choosing.

The questions asked of the participants took time to construct; some of the original questions were eliminated and others were trimmed down or refocused. I chose the questions by considering what questions I would want to be asked. I pondered over what was the exact information and data I was seeking. I asked others to consider and ponder the original questions in the same way. This process was helpful. In the end, some of the questions proved to be excellent and others not.

Observing the participants during the project is also a very credible means of gathering data.⁸ This is not some kind of sordid intrusive voyeurism; or worse still, haughty, or ignoble religious criticism.⁹ It is an important tenant of qualitative research and, therefore, a vital piece of data to be collected and coded. Given the nature of my project with participants receiving the Eucharist, my observation of them makes total sense. Observation lends credibility to the data gathering process by making subjective assessments that, in the end, will either be confirmed or refuted. The pre- and post-questionnaires and exit interview will be the litmus test for the accuracy and legitimacy of observations.

It is paramount and essential that this type of study be done in the participant's setting.¹⁰ Creswell goes on to explain that this natural setting is central to the researcher

⁸ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 19.

⁹ I would refer you to Proverbs 23:7, Matthew 5:28, 12:35, Mark 2:6, and Luke 7:39 for just a few examples.

¹⁰ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

in data collection, analyzing the data, and extrapolating meaning from the participant's focus inductively in meaningful, cogent, and compelling language.¹¹

Qualitative research that has a phenomenological methodology adamantly encourages one-on-one interviews.¹² This is the ultimate and consummate means of assessing the experience. It is face to face, eye to eye, heart to heart. It is common knowledge that our words, in face-to-face conversations, are assessed primarily by the tone of our voice and our body language over and above our words by at least 85% if not as high as 95%. I did these interviews face to face. We met in my office. We sat in chairs that were several feet apart. I began every interview with my mask on because of COVID-19. Every participant but one asked to take their mask off during the interview and asked me to take mine off as well. This is how I conducted the interviews.

The above points of contact presented as questions, observations made in the natural setting, and one-on-one interviews were used in my phenomenological qualitative methodology. This is vital to defining the how and why of my methodology in articulating the rationale for choosing to do my project within these parameters. This is the *raison-d'etre*.

These three methods of data gathering were used as a way of demonstrating the authenticity of the research. This approach is referred to as triangulating the data. This concept of triangulation data comes from both how navigation and surveying work is

¹¹ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 14.

¹² Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 134.

done.¹³ In this context, it allowed me to hone-in on three key points of contact to hit the target.

This data gathering process was chosen in conjunction with my professional, context, and peer associates. I explained to them that three sources of data were required. I defined the options that were available in this type of study as well as defining succinctly what a phenomenological qualitative study would look like and why this methodology was the best option, given the nature of the topic as well as the setting. I explained how this qualitative research approach was chosen to effectively explore, probe, and investigate the correlation between the frequency of receiving the Eucharist and healing.¹⁴

Six weeks before the actual project began, I did a series of teachings on the Eucharist interfaced with explanations and descriptions about the nature of the project itself. I had spoken on several occasions prior to this six-week period about the upcoming project, so the parish was somewhat familiar with what was coming.

All the parishioners were invited to participate in the project if they had a mind to do so. I did not specifically choose some parishioners while at the same time ignoring, avoiding, or denying other parishioners from participating. It was important to be perspicuously clear that any and every one of the parishioners could participate if they chose to. This invitation was given by me to the entire parish on Sunday mornings, our week-day services, through our website, and in weekly emails sent out to parishioners.

¹³ Triangulation is the process of measuring two points and then locating a third point. Information on this can also be found in The Sage Encyclopedia Qualitative Research Methods published in 2008 on page 892.

¹⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 4.

I did have numerous unchoreographed casual conversations with many parishioners before the actual project began. It was important that I be available and approachable to anyone who seemed to be expressing an interest in participating in the project or simply wanted more information about the project.

Because this study was to be implemented during the COVID 19 pandemic, there was much less participation than there might have otherwise been. The reticence on the part of some parishioners was understandable. It was important for no one to feel seduced, manipulated, or intimidated in having to participate in this study. Also, due to the pandemic, some parishioners have not attended church services physically; we did not live stream our service so real-time attendance was not possible.

I also addressed issues of confidentiality and the protection of persons' anonymity to the parish, as well as to everyone interested in participating in the project. A major emphasis was also made on participants not altering any medications, therapies, procedures, or counselling. All this information was disseminated by me in the ways already mentioned above.

As the project was preparing to launch, each participant was given a packet. Each packet was identical and had a unique number. Each participant randomly chose a packet; the participant was the only person who knew the number on his or her packet. This too, was for the purpose of protecting each participants anonymity. Each packet had a total of forty-six pages in it. The contents of the packets included an overview of the study, consent form, pre and post questionnaires, daily questionnaires, and daily journal entries. I am now ready to discuss the Implementation of this project.

Implementation

The implementation of the project is the praxis: methodology talks about what you are going to do whereas implementation is the actual doing.

I worked on a lot of farms growing up. I loved it, especially the tractor work. The owner of the farm would look at his field and determine what needed to be done. He would then instruct the farm hands to do it. Farming ground needs to be plowed, disced, and harrowed. Interestingly, these three pieces of equipment are referred to as implements: the tools or instruments of labor. This project is ready to move from the theoretical ideas found in the methodology to the practical application known as its implementation. Implementation is not just theorizing about the project it is doing it.

The project itself spanned twenty-one days, beginning Thursday, March 11, 2021, and ending Wednesday, March 31, 2021. However, the preparations for the project began much earlier.

Pre-Project Teaching Sermons

Six weeks prior to the start date of March 11, I gave teaching homilies on aspects of the Eucharist to better prepare those who participated. These homilies were given to the whole congregation on Sunday mornings. This allowed everyone in the congregation to be aware of what was happening and/or to be engaged in intercession for the participants. It was intentional on my part that there be nothing exclusive communicated to those who were not participating. I observed that this created an atmosphere of openness, congeniality, and oneness.

The underlying theme I maintained throughout this series on the Eucharist was the question: is there a correlation between receiving the Eucharist and healing? Thus, if the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus is truly present in the elements of bread and wine, then can receiving him in the Eucharist bring healing to our bodies, souls, and spirits?

The focus of the first teaching homily was the Eucharist as the antidote for mortality and the medicine of immortality. This phrase was first used by St. Ignatius of Antioch and has been carried down through the church over the centuries.¹⁵ The Eucharist as the antidote for mortality was seen as being both therapeutic (curative) and prophylactic (preventative).¹⁶ The Eucharist as the medicine of immortality was understood as the food that lasts forever, the foretaste and promise of heaven, and the source of strength for us spiritually throughout our pilgrimage in this life as citizens of heaven. The Eucharist is also the key to our transformation.¹⁷ The scripture texts used were Matthew 4:23 and John 6:54. I also addressed this in chapter 4.

The second homily was centered on Anamnesis. Anamnesis is Jesus saying, “Do this in remembrance of me” in Luke 22:19 and I Corinthians 11:24-25. In this document, I discussed Anamnesis in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Anamnesis does not translate well in English. Anamnesis is not recollecting or reminiscing; Anamnesis is the past event being made present in the moment. As Christians, to speak of the Lord’s Real Presence in our lives is at the very core of having a personal relationship with Christ. Anamnesis points to

¹⁵ Hampsch, *The Healing Power of the Eucharist*, 9.

¹⁶ Ibid., 125.

¹⁷ M. Scanlon and A. Shield, *And Their Eyes Were Opened* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Pubns, 1987), 33.

the Incarnation. As Christians we believe that towels can somehow host the very presence of Christ (Acts 19:11-12); oil (Mark 6:13 and James 5:14) and hands (Mark 16:18) can as well. We may not know how it works: how Christ's healing presence can be hosted in tangible realities; but we know why it works: simply because that is what Jesus told us to do. As a priest, placing my hands on and over the bread and wine, declaring Christ's words, and expecting and knowing that the elements will become Christ's body and blood is the most charismatic thing I do. What is said are Jesus words, not mine; when the Word speaks, things change.

Sacrum Convivium was the focus of the third teaching homily.¹⁸ The Sacrum Convivium means the sacred banquet as found throughout the scriptures. I focused on Isaiah 35:6 and Revelation 19:9 as I did in chapter 2 of this document. In Isaiah 35, the mountain is the Upper Room, and the meal is the Eucharist. In Revelation 19:9, the invitation to the marriage supper of the lamb is the Eucharistic celebration. Meals and their importance are found throughout the scriptures. Meals appear to have been very important to the Lord Jesus, the Eucharist in particular. I also related that the Patristic fathers saw the “daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer as specifically referring to the Eucharist, the marriage feast at Cana as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in all four gospels as a typology anticipating the Eucharist and Malachi 1:11 being the Eucharist as the activity that happens twenty-four hours a day.

The fourth teaching homily dealt with the Eucharist as sacrifice. This homily connects covenant with sacrifice; when covenant and sacrifice converge, we can expect

¹⁸ Barron, *Eucharist*, 31.

healing and deliverance to occur in our lives. The scripture passages I referenced were Jeremiah 31:31, Isaiah 53:10-11, Luke 22:15, and in chapters 2 and 4. In this homily I proposed that the Eucharist is the key to understanding the Cross, and the Cross gives meaning to the Eucharist. Also, how the fourth cup is intimately connected to Jesus' statement on the Cross, "It is finished," in John 19:30. I ask the question what is, "it."

A brief sketch of the fifth teaching homily is on the Agnus Dei. The Agnus Dei is Lamb of God. The Agnus Dei is part of the Liturgy, and this can be found in Appendix B. The scriptures I considered were Genesis 22:6-8, Exodus 12:1-8, Isaiah 53:6-7, John 1:29, and John 6:56. Jewish rabbis over the centuries have wondered about Abraham telling his son Isaac that God would provide the lamb. They have wondered why, in the scene in Genesis, a ram was provided, not a lamb; they have continually asked, but where is the lamb? In Exodus, the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door posts using the hyssop branch connects with the hyssop branch used to give our Lord sour wine in John 19:29. The command in Exodus to eat the lamb connects with John 6:56. The Hebrews in the Exodus account knew that somehow God dwelt in the blood of the lamb and flesh of the lamb. Jesus, in the John passages, collapses the distance by connecting them to himself. I also brought to light the connection between Exodus 12:1-8 and the week before Jesus' crucifixion. The instruction given in Exodus was that the lamb was to be examined for five days to make sure there were no blemishes. In the journey through Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Good Friday, Jesus was examined on eight different occasions and declared innocent, unblemished in every case. In the Isaiah passage just as the Suffering Servant opens not his mouth before his shearers, so Jesus on five different occasions opens not his mouth. The reason for pointing out these stories was to begin the process of

helping the people see the pattern concerning Christ and the Eucharist. It seems many Christians have information through hearing or reading stories, but they don't see the pattern. Some additional scripture references to nuance my previous statement would be Luke 22:15, 24:25-27, 24:44-45, and John 5:39, to mention just a few. The Agnus Dei, which means, "Lamb of God", is a part of the Eucharistic liturgy and comes immediately before people receive the Eucharist. A copy of the liturgy can be found in Appendix B.

Lastly, I will summarize the sixth and final teaching homily. In this homily I looked at the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6:22-69, The Emmaus Account in Luke 13-35, and the Institution of the Lord's Supper pericope in I Corinthians 11:23-34. I quoted the Patristic Fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, Flanner O'Connor, J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis regarding the benefits of receiving the Eucharist. Some of these quotes can be found in chapter 3 and in chapter 4. In this last homily, I reviewed three themes that had been woven throughout the series. First was the question 'is there a correlation between receiving the Eucharist and healing?' The second theme was the observation of several of the spiritual disciplines rooted in the mystical tradition of early Christianity. These spiritual disciplines practiced abiding in Christ through examining their response to Christ's passionate invitation to receive him in the Eucharist: a.) the Three Powers of the Soul¹⁹ (these three are the memory, understanding and will). These are explained in greater detail by Catherine of Siena in revelations given her while in ecstasy after receiving the Eucharist. It is imperative to grasp the importance of understanding as being the glue that holds the other two in proper perspective: what you

¹⁹ Suzanne Noffke, *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena: 2nd Edition* (San Jose, CA: iUniverse, 2001), 174–175.

don't understand, you don't value, what you don't value you don't keep, what you don't keep you can't multiply and what you can't multiply you have no authority over),²⁰ b) St. Ignatius of Loyola's Rules for Discernment of Spirits (awareness, understanding, and taking action),²¹ c.) Lex Orandi & Lex Credendi (The rule of prayer establishes the rule of faith: how one prays expresses what one believes),²² d.) Ex Operे Operato and Ex Operе Operantis (simply put, our disposition matters when we approach the table).²³ (Jovian Lang²⁴ and Justo Gonzalez²⁵ also give helpful definitions for this Latin phrase that was vitally present in the early church but not specifically named until the middle ages.) The third theme woven throughout the series was the renewing of our minds prescribed in Romans 12:1-2. I revisited the concept of neuroplasticity, which is how the thoughts in our minds sculpt our brains. Re-sculpting can happen effectively over a

²⁰ Catherine of Siena and Giuliana Cavallini, *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), 103-108, 277. The following is a brief synopsis for understanding the three powers of the soul: Memory is for holding onto the Lord's blessings. Understanding is for seeing/discriminating to know the truth. Will is for loving... Understanding is the most noble of the three powers, because, what you don't understand you don't remember and because you can't remember it you can't choose it. This quote explains the powers a bit further: "It pleased Me to create you in My image and likeness with great providence. I provided you with the gift of memory so that you might hold fast My benefits and be made a sharer in My own, the eternal Father's power. I gave you understanding so that in the wisdom of My only-begotten Son, you might comprehend and know what, I the eternal Father, want. I who gave you graces with such burning love. I gave you a will to love, making you a sharer in the Holy Spirit's mercy, so that you might love what your understanding sees and knows."

²¹ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 15.

²² John Trigillo, Rev Kenneth Brighenti, and Rev Monsignor James Cafone, *Catholic Mass For Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2011), 144.

²³ Roger W. Nutt and Roger W. Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 2017), 172–173.

²⁴ Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing, 1989), 195–196.

²⁵ González, *Essential Theological Terms*, 59.

period of 21 days if given intentionality. It is for this reason that the project spanned 21 days. This is explained in chapter 5.

As I consider the three themes woven throughout these six teaching homilies, I am cognizant of how Dr. Randy Clark encourages persons at his conferences, especially at the time of impartation, to have a fervent desire for more. I find this very compelling, in light of my project on the Eucharist. John Kane captures this in the following:

The realization of the love that urged Christ to empty Himself for us, the conviction of what we receive who have nothing to offer Christ but our miserable selves, will inflame our souls with a love that will consume in them whatever would offend the sacramental Savior.²⁶

During the twenty-one days of the project itself, I was the celebrant at every Eucharist and did a short teaching homily on the Eucharist at each service as well. These teachings would last anywhere from five to fifteen minutes. These Eucharists were attended by people participating in the project as well as people who were not participating but wanted to come to a daily Eucharistic celebration.

I observed that the daily Eucharistic celebrations were well attended. Attendance ranged from six to twenty-five people at every Eucharistic service. I believe this number was amazing given that we were having three Eucharistic services every day, Monday through Friday, with one on Saturday and one on Sunday amidst COVID 19.

The service times were 6:30 AM, 12:00 PM, and 6:30 PM Monday through Friday, 12:00 PM on Saturday, and 9:00 AM on Sunday. Other than the Sunday morning service, which sometimes lasts for up to two hours because of an extended time for live worship and a longer homily, the other services lasted about one hour. I had anticipated

²⁶ John A. Kane, *Transforming Your Life Through the Eucharist* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1999), 139.

the services being shorter. The participants in attendance as well as others who had come for the Eucharist, lingered longer, mostly in quiet prayer. I observed that they were entering into the experience.

Participants

If everyone who claims COTR as their church were to attend on the same Sunday, our attendance would be approximately ninety, but on any given Sunday we average around forty. We are very small. We have people from within the community who attend COTR as well others who come from outside the area. Persons who attend COTR from outside the community do so out of choice. Where we are located is by no means sought after as a destination. Those who attend from the community have less options. The median income for a household in Fairfield is just under \$35,000.00. The per capita income for the city is right at \$18,000. There has been a slow decline of the population in Fairfield.²⁷ This is not an easy area to minister in or to live due to the many factors that were discussed in the first chapter. Throwing COVID 19 into the mix has certainly not helped matters.

There were thirty persons who took a packet. Of those thirty, two did not complete the project. One of those two took a packet but did not begin the process. The other one took the packet, turned in the consent form and pre-study questionnaire but nothing else. This left twenty-eight participants that completed the project.

²⁷ Up to date information on Fairfield continues to be very difficult to attain. Everything I could find through the city government offices, the library, and internet were very minimal, disorganized, and outdated.

We have a huge age range at COTR from toddlers to those in their eighties. The ages of the participants ranged from those in their twenties to those in their eighties; two were in their twenties, seven were in their thirties, one in their forties, six in their fifties, ten in their sixties, three in their seventies, and one in their eighties. We do have several families with small children who attend COTR. Two of these families signed up to participate but only one followed through. This may be due to scheduling conflicts.

The education level in Fairfield is dismal. As of 2017, the Fairfield City school district ranking was a “D.” The three elementary schools and the high school all received an “F.” The education level of the project participants varied. Nine Participants have only a high school education, eight hold a bachelor’s degree, seven have master’s degrees, and four have attained doctoral degrees.

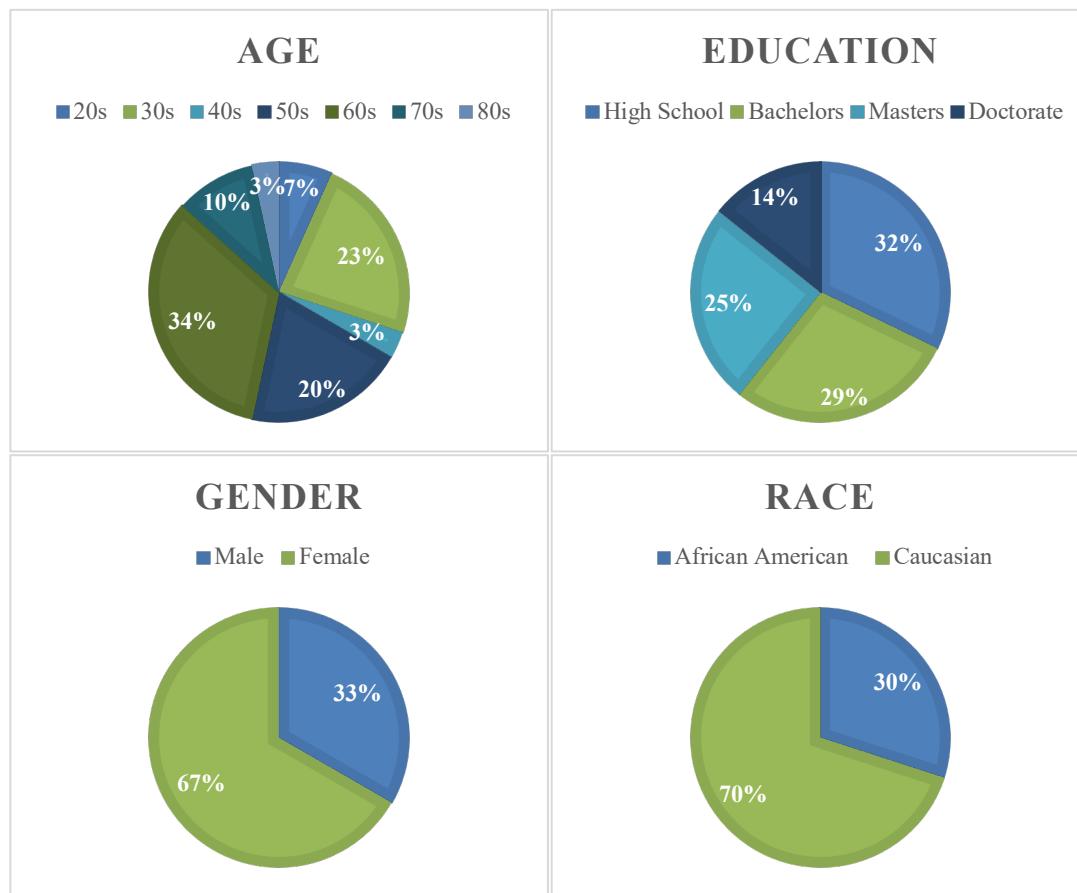
The gender makeup of COTR is approximately 56% female and 44% male. Twenty females and ten males took packets.

The racial make-up of Fairfield is roughly 95% African American and 5% Caucasian. If everyone who attends COTR were to come worship on a Sunday, the ethnic breakdown would be roughly forty African Americans and fifty Caucasians. I have been told on many occasions that most churches here are either black or white. If this is true, then that gives this project an unusual dimension given the racial climate we all find ourselves in. Of the thirty people who took packets to participate in the project, nine were African American and twenty-one were Caucasian.

In addition to the twenty-eight people who participated in the project, there were three other African American males that attended the services nearly every day, and several African American females who came occasionally (once or twice a week).

All this information is important only to show that those who participated in the project reflect an overall picture of this local community as well as the larger community outside this corridor. The participants were not just from one age group, or gender, or ethnicity, or educational level. The following charts show the numbers given above in percentages.

Participant Information



Packet

As I discussed earlier in the Methodology section, each participant was given a packet. Each packet had a unique number. The packets were chosen randomly by the

participants. This too, was for the purpose of protecting each participant's anonymity.

Each packet had a total of forty-six pages in it. The contents of the packet included an overview of the study, consent form, pre and post questionnaires, daily questionnaires, and daily journal prompts. I also spoke about this with the congregation so everyone in attendance knew what was occurring. The packet can be found in Appendix A.²⁸

The first page of the packet, entitled "Dear Participants", began with an "IMPORTANT NOTE," stating that this study was not a substitute for medical care. It reminded all participants to follow all the guidelines prescribed by their medical provider, to not stop any medical treatment without the direct instruction from their medical provider, and lastly not to refuse changes in their medical treatments or surgeries prescribed by their medical providers. This first paragraph was so stated in line with the IRB to assure the safety of each participant. This first page goes on to explain how each packet has a number on it and not a name. This, also in keeping with IRB concerns, was for the purpose of protecting the anonymity of each participant and making great attempts to assure confidentiality. The next paragraph on this page explained how to navigate through the rest of the packet. I will deal with that momentarily. The next paragraph informs each participant that they will be having an exit interview with me, following the completion of this project.

I had a discussion with each of the participants on a one-to-one basis about the contents of the packet and why it was structured the way it was. I explained what the purpose of the pre-questionnaire was and why it needed to be turned in with the consent to participate medical waiver form. I explained why we had numbers on the packets and

²⁸ Please note the Day 2 through day 21 were the same as Day 1.

not names to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. I then explained the rest of the contents of the packet as daily assessment and daily journal questionnaires. I explained the post-study questionnaire and how that along with the daily assessment questionnaires would need to be turned in at the end of the project. I explained the daily journal entries were to be kept by them as their journal entries were private. I discussed these directives with them as a group and individually.

The last paragraph encourages all participants to go about their daily lives and routines as normal as possible even while participating in this project. It then restates the necessity for not changing any medical treatment, whatsoever, as prescribed by their medical provider. Again, this is in line with IRB recommendations for the protection of each participant. This first page was constructed with the consultation of my context and professional associates, two of which are in the medical field.

The next page is the “Consent to Participate in Research Study.” This page is broken up into five sections: (1) Summary of Study; (2) Medical Agreement; (3) Confidentiality; (4) Release, Waiver of Liability, and Indemnity; (5) The participants signature where-in they understood and agreed to participate. This page was drafted and composed in conjunction with my professional associates (one who is a lawyer) and context associates’ recommendations. This was a further step in protecting each participant in accordance with IRB’s recommendations.

The next and third page was the ‘Pre-Study Questionnaire.’ It has ten questions on it. These questions were formulated from the input of my professional and context associates. These questions were open-ended. They were designed for each participant to assess their present status on several levels.

The “Consent to Participate in Research Study” and the “Pre-Study Questionnaire” forms were to be turned in before the project began. The consents and questionnaires were collected by having participants place them in bins located on two tables in the sanctuary. This ensured that returning the forms was both easy and confidential. The consent form, on which the participant signed his or her name, did not have a participant number on it, but all the other pages in the packet were marked with the participant number.

The next portion of the packet was forty-two pages long, with two pages assigned for each day of the twenty-one days. One double-sided page was a Personal Journal with nine open-ended questions. These daily journal entries were to be filled out by the participants, but not returned at the end of the project. These journal entries were to help the participants reflect, process, and recall their thoughts and feelings each day of the project. The other single-sided page was a Daily Questionnaire. The questionnaire had a space to check the actions that they took that day, i.e., confession, fasting, Eucharist, etc. It also listed eleven statements that participants could respond to using an interval scale. These questions assessed things like how tired or rested, how anxious or peaceful the participant was feeling on that day. The daily assessment questionnaires were to be returned at the end of the project.

The final page of the packet was the Post-Study Questionnaire. It had ten questions like the Pre-Study questionnaire. They were designed in conjunction with my professional and context associates. These questions asked the participant if anything happened. If so, the participants were asked if they considered what happed to be good or

bad. This page, along with the twenty-one daily assessment questionnaires, was to be turned in to the bin provided.

The packet containing the project overview, consent form, pre and post questionnaires, daily assessment, and daily journal comprised the written data which allowed me to determine the success or failure of the project on each participant's behalf.

The illustration used in the beginning of this section referenced implements used on a farm: how farming a piece of land entails plowing, discing, and harrowing as the necessary instruments of labor to prepare the soil for receiving the seed. These actions are not theoretical. The implementation of my project was accomplished by using the implements of questionnaires, assessments, interviews, and observations. I used these devices for the praxis of my project. The implementation of the project is the praxis: methodology talks about what you are going to do whereas implementation is the actual doing. However, implements are only effective on a piece of land if the soil itself has the necessary nutrients for being able to sustain growth. Jesus uses the image of soil in several parables as a picture of our hearts. In our hearts He plants His Word. In this project, the Incarnate Word is the very seed of the Eucharist. It is now time to move from the implementation to examine what was harvested in the Summary of Learnings section.

Summary of Learnings

My hypothesis for this project was that if individuals received the Eucharist on a regular basis over a three-week period within the context of the daily and Sunday liturgical celebrations, they would experience healing. This healing would entail a

measurable change in the physical and emotional well-being of the person, which was to be analyzed either through a medical diagnosis or their testimony of a recognizable relief. This study was looking to see if there was a correlation between the frequency of communion and healing.

This hypothesis emerged from my research and my experience. Therefore, I wanted to investigate the correlation between healing and receiving the Eucharist. My conjecture was that my hypotheses met the criteria of falsifiability. I realized I might discover that there was no correlation between healing and receiving Eucharist. I understood that the only way to know for sure was to see whether the data collected would verify my hypothesis (also known as verisimilitude). If not, I would discover that the data revealed my conjecture to be unsupportable.

In the methodology portion I spoke of using three sources of data to gather information to be triangulated and coded. The first data sources I looked at were the pre and post questionnaires. The second sources of data I examined were the daily questionnaires. The third was through exit interviews. As I implemented my project, I discovered that all along I had been gathering data through another source: observation in the natural setting. In the following paragraphs I will discuss in detail what I learned from each of these data sources.

Pre- and Post-Study Questionnaire

The first sources of data, the pre and post questionnaires, which are found in Appendix A, were used to surface a change. The pre-study questionnaire was pivotal in this process because it asked the participants to draw a line in the sand and state what

they wanted to have happen. The post-study questionnaire was also monumental because it showed whether anything happened. I am reminded of the healing of blind Bartimaeus found in Mark 10:46-52 as nuancing the pre-questionnaire. Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus asking for mercy. Jesus then calls Bartimaeus to come to him and then asks him what he wants. The pre-questionnaire was asking, “what do you want?” The post-study questionnaire was probing to see if any healing happened, and if so, what was it and how did it occur.

The pre-study questionnaire was made up of ten questions. From this tool, I learned that 10 of the 22 people who completed the questionnaire participated in a Eucharist expecting to receive healing. The participants reported that 18 of them were contending for physical healing, 17 for spiritual healing, and 19 for emotional healing. In response to the level of confidence that they would receive healing, 55% of those who responded were unsure and 45% were confident. If they were healed in a way other than what they were expected, twenty-one of them said they would consider this a successful result; one did not know. When asked about their attitudes about the study, the respondents used the following words and phrases: curious, optimistic, willing, hopeful, good, learning process, excited, expectant, grateful, looking forward, good study, positive, open to see, great anticipation, committed, and refreshing.

The 10-question post-study questionnaire was completed by 20 of the participants and all of them reported they were glad that they participated in the study. Three of the participants reported that the type of healing they were desiring changed during the three-week period of the project. Amazingly, 19 out of 20 or 95% of the respondents reported that they had a partially or fully successful result! Three out of four of the participants

reported that they were healed in a way other than what was expected, and one participant said they didn't yet know. Half of them are completely confident that a future Eucharist will bring healing, but the others reported that they are not as sure. Of the participants that answered the question, 89% claim that they consider Eucharistic healing a success. At the completion of the project, when they were asked about their attitudes regarding the study, they used the following words and phrases: interesting, sadness it's over, neutral, indifferent, incredible experience, a victory, positive, continue to study benefits of Eucharist, extremely thankful, successful, joyful, immense blessing, focused time, helpful, wish it could go on forever, very positive, very spiritual, healing, and educational.

Daily Questionnaire

The second way of gathering data was through the daily questionnaire assessment profile and daily journal entry prompts. This tool helped the participants to track their progress or regress along the way for twenty-one days. The intent of this daily regiment was to encourage the participants to stay the course. I am reminded of Jesus teaching the disciple how to pray in Luke 11:1-13 and how to abide in John 6:56 and John 15:1-8. In the Luke pericope, Jesus teaches them how to pray to the Father and then gives two teaching parables. The second one is his admonition for them not to give up seeking, knocking, and asking. The passages in John invited them to learn how to sleep amid storms by resting in his presence amidst the journey of their lives. The daily journal had the same purpose: persevering and abiding. Knowing this was to be part of their routine for twenty-one days was used to help them focus and be intentional on what to be thinking about.

Of the twenty-eight participants in the project, eighteen of them completed and returned the Daily Questionnaire. Each day the participants responded to eleven Likert scale statements. The table below portrays the weekly and overall average of the responses to each of the statements.

Daily Questions Likert Responses

Statement (Likert Response)	Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg	Week 3 Avg	Overall Avg
I am feeling (1-Anxious, 3-Normal, 5-Peaceful)	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.4
I am feeling (1-Tired, 3-Normal, 5-Rested)	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0
I felt close to God (1-Distant, 3-Normal, 5-Close)	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5
I have heard from God (1-Silent, 3-Quiet, 5-Clear)	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.4
My healing is getting (1-Worse, 3-No Change, 5-Healed)	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.6
To what degree do I feel Eucharist is the primary reason for my healing (1-Not At All, 3-Don't Know, 5-Confident)	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.9
My faith in Eucharistic healing (1-Doubtful, 3-Hopeful, 5-Confident)	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.9
This experience is (1-Discouraging, 3-No Change, 5-Encouraging)	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2
My healing goal has (1-No Change, 3-Modified, 5-Changed)	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.5
My healing expectations are (1-No Change, 3-Modified, 5-Open)	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8

Exit Interviews

The third way I gathered data was through the exit interview. Sitting and talking with me gave each of them the opportunity to tell me, in person, using their own words,

what happened. With the use of the ten open ended questions what happened and how it happened was brought into the light.

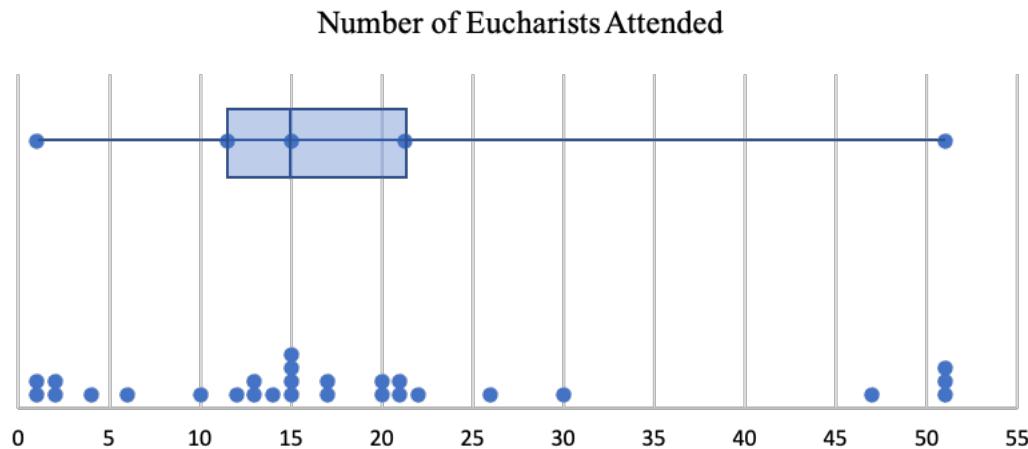
The exit interviews of these twenty-eight participants were done by me over a three-week period following the completion of the project. The length of time this took was simply due to scheduling issues. Most of the exit interviews, twenty-two of them, were done within three days of the project's completion. Four of the remaining six were interviewed by me over the phone, and the last two were interviewed by me, in person, at the end of three weeks.

I conducted twenty-four interviews in person at my office at COTR. I initially maintained an appropriate distance and began every interview with my mask on. Twenty-three of those interviewed asked me to take my mask off as they took theirs off as well. This request by the twenty-three participants not only made the observations much easier, which is stating the obvious, but changed the whole aura and climate in the room. These conversations were unscripted, unfiltered, and unbelievably prodigious.

In the exit interview I asked each participant ten questions. The first five questions aimed at compiling data regarding what they experienced during the project. The next four questions gathered feedback regarding the methodology of the project. The final question was open ended and gave the opportunity for the participant to give additional reflections on the project. In the following paragraphs I will give numerical data pertaining to the participants' responses to questions 1 to 5. I will include in these paragraphs some qualifying information, or information given from their responses. Because question 10 was open-ended, it allowed me to learn much about the participants' experiences during the 21 days. I will share this information, and then will make a few

observations and parse out some of the insight received during the exit interview. Finally, I will share some of the participant's testimonies. I will present the responses to questions 6-9 in the conclusion of this chapter, where I will discuss things I would change about the implementation of my project.

Question 1: How many Eucharists did you attend? I found that there was a wide range in the number of Eucharistic celebrations participants attended. The minimum number of celebrations attended by a participant was one; three participants attended all 51 of the celebrations. The average number of celebrations attended was 15. One quarter of the participants attended between 1 and 12 celebrations, half attended between 12 and 21 celebrations, and a quarter of the participants attended 22 or more. The box-and-whisker plot and scatterplot below depict the spread of the data.

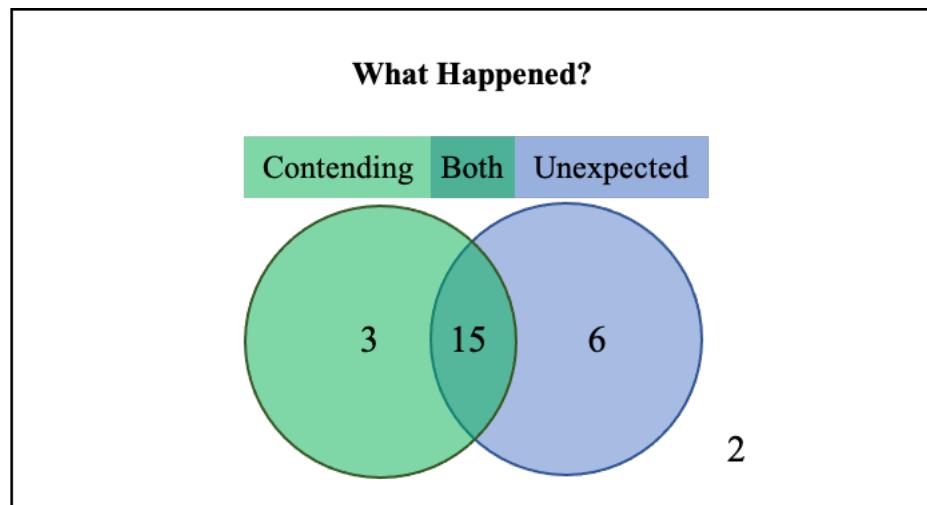


One of the participants who attended all 51 Eucharist celebrations explained that they felt it was a way to challenge their flesh by using this as a spiritual discipline. In their words “my obedience and sacrifice were an offering of worship to the Lord.”

Question 2: What Happened: Did what you were contending for happen? Seven of the 28 participants answered no to this question. This question was not applicable to two

of the participants, and 18 responded affirmatively, meaning that 64% of the participants experienced what they were contending for. With further inquiry into the participants that responded no, I found that there was only one participant that did not get any breakthrough in what they were contending for, which leads us to the third question.

Question 3: What Happened: Did anything unexpected happen other than what you were contending for? Seventy-nine percent of the participants reported something unexpected happened during the three weeks. Six participants reported nothing unexpected happened or that this question was not applicable. When combining the results of questions 2 and 3, the data shows that 93% of the participants either received what they were contending for or experienced something unexpected; 54% received what they were contending for and experienced something unexpected. The Venn Diagram below illustrates the numerical results of questions 2 and 3.



Question 4: If anything happened, do you correlate this with receiving the Eucharist? All but one of the participants reported that they correlated what happened with receiving the Eucharist whether they received the Eucharist as few as two times or as many as fifty-one.

Question 5: Would you do it again? Of the 28 participants, only one person said they would never do this again; one person said they were not sure if they would ever do this again. The other 26 participants said they would do it again.

Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to say? I was pleasantly surprised to find that everyone had something else to say in response to this open-ended question. The responses to this question gave me the most insight into what the participants experienced and felt during the 21 days of the project. The following are some accounts from some of the participants.

Participant A did not get anything out of the experience at all and they would not do it again. They were skeptical the whole time about anything happening. They felt distracted at every service they attended. This participant was the only one that was thoroughly adamant that this experience was not worthwhile whatsoever.

Participant B experienced a completed healing in their ankle and a breakthrough in a strained relationship with a family member. Participant C expressed that they received “a deeper revelation about the true nature of Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist.” Participant D expressed how there were some significant pattern changes that occurred, “my perspective has changed.” Participant E said, “I felt better, more hopeful and less discouraged.”

Participant F shared,

My prayer life has been reestablished and my thinking has changed. I received revelation about rejection, abandonment and wanting to be alone a lot. All this came to the surface for me. My spirit was open to a lot of unforgiveness that I had been holding onto. My eyes were opened to a lot of things that needed to change in my life. I became more focused and aware.

Participant G did not get the breakthrough physically that they had been contending for but testified that they did get great insight into some anxiety and shame issues. "I was hoping for a miracle, but I feel like I made some progress." Participant H felt things got worse but did not attribute this to receiving the Eucharist. They got an insight into a low level of anxiety they have been contending with for years and now know the source of it.

Participant I testified that their hands were healed. They said, "I received more in the area of my spirituality with the Lord." Participant J talked about a breakthrough, "I'm walking forward and quitting being a victim, and this has been a major breakthrough." Participant J also said, "I had many visions during the Eucharist."

Participant K talked about how the thing they were contending for physically seemed to be getting worse. Then a breakthrough came during one of the Eucharists, I began feeling a special love for the Lord and his love for those coming up for his Precious Blood and then his love for me. Then I knew that I can really trust that he loves me. My trust came from believing that he loves me. I believe as a choice. I don't wrestle with this now. I can understand his personal love for me and can choose to trust him. And when I really trust him, that is where surrender and freedom come from. The Lord answered my prayer.

Participant L talked about how they got a real breakthrough as how to pray. This was huge for them. Participant M was healed of high blood pressure which was what they had been contending for; and in addition, said,

I had an unexpected cleansing of my heart from things and the Lord honored my desire to be cleansed of these things. I know that the Eucharist is a central point of healing, and even the laying on of hands comes after we have received the Eucharist. I was always expecting the Lord to show up. I never doubted. I just did not know how he would do it.

Participant N said they had received the following from the Lord:

Great insights into the Scriptures, how praise is a form of warfare, and suffering. Before coming to COTR I took communion once a month. Now I know and understand it more and love taking the Eucharist. And the more I take it the more I realize what he has done for me.

Participant O regretted not attending more Eucharists and next time would prepare themselves more. They said, “I expected to be healed but where was my consistency in contending for it.” Participant P also said they wished they had come to more Eucharists because they noticed how they felt better even when only having come a few times. Participant Q explained how they don’t often feel well, but every time that they come to the Eucharist they feel better. “Every time!”

Participant R said,

I have more humility. I loved and enjoyed and was spiritually high. My spiritual life boosted. I experienced peace. It kept the negative away by being kept positive. It kept my spirit up.

Participant S testified that a prayer request for their beginning salvation was answered. They were elated. Participant T felt they got tremendous revelation,

The Lord showed himself more and this was because of the Eucharist. By means of participating in the Eucharist, the reality and the truth of the Eucharist is participating in his life now. The Eucharist puts a spotlight on why Christ really did all this for us. Doing this for twenty-one days plays clearly into neuroplasticity. I have no doubt that I am loved. This is very humbling to me.

Participant U expressed how valuable this experience was to them in doing it every day. It was an eyeopener. “Doing things purposely and repetitively has value.”

Participant V talked about healing from intrusive thoughts.

Participant W asked the Lord for a specific healing within a specific time frame and that prayer was answered and they were completely healed. They also shared how that because of their schedule they were only able to attend two Eucharists. Instead, they were in prayer three times a day while the Eucharists were occurring at COTR. In my

conversation with them, I explained about the Christian discipline of spiritual communion. This was a discipline that arose out of Christians wanting to receive the Eucharist but because of circumstances they were unable to do so. Participant W did not realize that they were practicing the spiritual discipline of receiving spiritual communion. They said,

A door has been opened. I have a deeper and newer grasp of the joyful intentionality of the Eucharist as the Lord gives himself to each of us. I was filled with joy and delight. A door has been opened to walk in healing, adventure, intimacy, confidence, and expectancy of his joy and favor. It was a great joy and privilege to be part of this product.

Participant X said,

I received some spiritual and mental surgery for myself. I experienced some deliverance. This was very unexpected. It showed me God's faithfulness. He really comes down and touches us in special ways. It was like getting a chiropractic alignment.

Participant Y said what happened for them was completely unexpected.

I did not anticipate the importance of receiving the Eucharist with other people and this was a huge part of the experience. It also created some crossing over some racial divides that I never anticipated happening. The reality of the Gospel in my life came alive because of doing this. The early morning hour was great. People who came that early had a level of buy in. I have more boldness now in witnessing to people throughout the day because of receiving the Eucharist every day. I believe more is going to come out of this. And this is going to be a real transformation point for COTR.

Participant Z said I had "a much greater sense of peace, and this was not a surprise. Then they shared how they terribly missed not being able to receive the Eucharists several times every day, "it left a void when it ended."

Observations

The fourth way data was gathered was through my overall observations made during the six-week teaching homily time frame and fifty-one Eucharists we celebrated

over the twenty-one days of the project. These subjective assessments are an important data gathering tool in a phenomenological qualitative study.

These observations came from what I saw, heard, or felt in the natural setting of my context and not from anything else. This is important: these observations were not extrapolated from the other sources of data. They lend a degree of credibility to the process, but they are not intended to stand alone. And as I stated earlier, in the end they will either be confirmed or refuted when the other data is brought to bear.

In making observations, they must be wise, innocent, and balanced. This encapsulates the instruction that Jesus gave his disciples in Matthew 10:16 “...be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” Studying this passage reveals that Jesus was referring to eyes: focus intently like a serpent and lovingly like a dove. Also, in Ephesians 5:15, Paul states, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise...” Along this trajectory, William Blake’s infamous poem is apropos here:

This life’s windows of the soul
Distorts the Heavens from pole to pole,
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see with, not thro’ the eye.²⁹

It is imperative to be humble and circumspect when making these observable subjective assessments because I can harbor biases which then makes my imagination vulnerable to distortion. Therefore, I want to be observing through the eye, not simply with the eye. I will limit my observations to just a few, highlighting those most poignant to me.

²⁹ Ravi Zacharias, *Why Jesus?: Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality* (New York, NY: FaithWords, 2012), 24.

My first observation was that there was a different energy present within the church in each service throughout the day. The environment remained the same, but the atmosphere was markedly different in the services. In the early morning service, those participating in the project, as well as those just attending the daily liturgy were prayerful, worshipful, engaged, and attentive. I never once saw a person yawn or exhibit signs of being overtired. At the evening service, I saw more tiredness being manifested with some persons yawning and appearing worn out after what might have been a long day for them. In the evening service, some of those attending the service seemed distracted with some being on their phones nearly the whole service. There was a more palatable worshipful atmosphere present in both the early morning and noon services. I took time nearly every service to allow for a brief period of interaction, testimonies, prophetic words, and questions. This went well nearly every day for the first two services at 6:30 AM and noon but was quite dismal at the evening one. I felt more urgency to keep things moving in the evening service to maintain a firm hold on staying within a specific boundary of time. Having said that, I had more one on one time with participants in the evening service who wanted to linger and talk about issues in their life.

My second observation was the daily make up of participants and others who came to the services. The morning and evening services were the most consistent with the same people coming throughout the twenty-one days. The noon day service had a much greater variety of both participants and parishioners. This variety changed the dynamic of the service. This was the most lively of the three.

The time of the service and the makeup of those in attendance was fascinating in how it set the rhythm for the liturgy. There were more testimonies at the first two services.

In the morning and evening service, those attending tended to sit in the same place each time. The noon day service was very different in people sitting in different places throughout the twenty-one days.

Every Tuesday we distribute food to the community from the church following the noon day service. On average, we serve approximately one hundred families through our food pantry. The attendance on those Tuesdays was much greater than all the other services. Each of those Tuesday services during the project were very lively. The participants were tuned in and contending for breakthrough; that drew everyone else into a vibrant synergy that was fiery and robust. It was exciting to see an air of expectation and anointing, like a cloud of glory, that covered everyone in attendance.

Reflecting on Results

In this section I will reflect on the data I collected as a whole. I will begin by making some general remarks, and then I will spend some time sharing in-depth about the experiences of three of the participants.

Every single participant had something happen, even if it was negative. It was notable to me how many of the participants were dealing with issues of anxiety often connected to a physical condition they were contending for. Others were just trying to manage issues of anxiety that seemed at times to overwhelm them. I believe that this showed the impact that COVID 19 has had upon the psyche of so many of us. I believe the participants have been shaken to the core because so much has been altered in the past two years. COVID ushered in anxiety and frustrations by way of wearing masks, social distancing and not congregating. Additionally, we suffered from the question ‘who is

essential?’ and many threatening pronouncements of irreversible financial catastrophe, threats of death lurking everywhere, and everyone being suspect as a carrier of unmitigated woes.

Most every participant was desiring physical healing. These were listed on their pre-study questionnaires. Only two participants received a miraculous healing that was corroborated by a medical professional. Two participants experienced some physical relief from their symptoms, but these were not verified medically. And yet all but two experienced noticeable relief from anxiety and a marked increase in unfettered peace. The two that did not experience relief from anxiety and depression were hoping it would lift.

What was even more illustrious to me was the preeminence of nearly all the participants wanting greater intimacy with the Lord. My point is this: there was more of a desire for intimacy than there was focusing on getting rid of the anxiety issues. I would contend that reason alone is why much of the anxiety diminished among so many of the participants.

I observed celebrating the Eucharist fifty-one times in a three-week period established a rhythm for the participants. Many said they were comforted just knowing that it was being celebrated three times a day at specific times. This was the heartfelt cry of Participant Z quoted earlier. For many, they were spiritually present even though they were not physically present. This was the expressed testimony of Participant W quoted previously. This to me is almost unimaginable. An increase in peace for everyone who highlighted it had one common denominator: a longing for deeper intimacy with the Lord that was mentioned earlier. This is reminiscent of Catherine of Siena’s fundamental

insight about the Eucharist, which is where “humanity comes to find itself in love.” This is found in chapter three.

There were three participants that said things got worse during the project but stated that none of that had anything to do with receiving the Eucharist. One was skeptical from the outset, felt coerced by family to participate, and was adamant that their issue would need to be dealt with in a completely different way. They believed the Eucharist would not help in this situation. The second one knew that their situation was because of warfare, and the third one had a complete change of venue spiritually.

There is so much more I could reminisce on, but I would like to focus the conversation onto several of the participants. Because I have triangulated and coded the data, I am now prepared to look at several individuals through the lens of the four sources of data: daily questionnaire, pre and post questionnaire, exit interview and observations. I will refer to them as follows: participant A, participant L, and participant M.

Participant A’s daily questionnaire numbers were between 1.0 and 2.7 throughout the project. They felt anxious and tired throughout the project. They did not feel close to God or that they had heard from the Lord. They felt the healing they were contending for was getting worse, that the Eucharist was not pertinent, and that they had little faith in the Eucharist as a means of healing. The whole experience was discouraging for them. The second source of data was taken from their pre-and post-study questionnaires. In the pre-study questionnaire, they stated that they wanted healing emotionally and physically but was skeptical it would happen; they felt much of this was wishful thinking. In their post-study questionnaire, they said they had gotten worse, that they were still skeptical, and they were doing this more out of routine. They had no positive results to report from their

participation in this project. The third source of data was the exit interview. They stated that nothing of what they had been contending for occurred, neither physically nor emotionally. They felt they had gotten worse instead of better. They said that they would not do a project like this again: that it was tiring, they did not get anything out of it at all, and they felt indifferent to the whole thing. The fourth source of data was my observations. I felt compassion for them as I could see they were struggling and were distracted at every Eucharist they attended. They appeared to me to be disengaged the whole time. The numbers taken from the daily questionnaire were confirmed by the other three sources of data. Having triangulated and coded this data, it is fair to say this project on Participant A's behalf was a dismal failure.

Participant A might benefit well from an exam from a medical professional to eliminate what might be the source of their malaise. Participant A might also benefit from spiritual discipline in conjunction with spiritual direction.

Using St. Ignatius's discerning of spirits, Participant A could be experiencing desolation that could be helped through inner healing; drawing on St. John of the Cross, this participant may well be in the throes of the dark night of the soul that could be helped in spiritual direction.

At the Eucharist, lex credendi, lex orandi can be a plumb line: the rule of faith establishes the rule of prayer. The rule of faith is the word received; the liturgy is the word (prayer) expressed: what you believe is expressed in how you pray. This can be a helpful barometer in exposing our inward disposition.

Along with this is considering ex opere operantis, which reflects the fundamental stance and fundamental option of our life. Our choices (or options) either confirm our

stance or undermine our stance. In essence, it is talking the talk and walking the walk. In other words, our disposition matters. The disposition we bring to worship matters significantly. And given the reality of neuroplasticity: that our mind changes our brain by what we think about repetitively can either create toxic or healthy neuropathways.

Renewing our minds (Romans 12:1-2), casting down imaginations (II Corinthians 10:3-6), dismissing anxiety (Philippians 4:4-8) rejoicing, praying, and thanking (I Thessalonians 5:16-18) consistently and repetitively is vital to our health as Christians. It is not our work; it is just us cooperating with His.

It is time to move on to the next participant, Participant L. Participant L's daily questionnaire numbers were between 3.0 and 5.0 throughout the project. They felt peaceful and rested throughout the project. They felt relatively close to the Lord throughout the project. They felt their healing was progressing and confident and hopeful about the Eucharist as being the conduit for this happening. They felt this experience was encouraging and would do this again. They felt their focus had changed and they were open to this occurring. The second source of data was taken from their pre- and post-study questionnaires. In the pre-study questionnaire, they were contending for a specific physical healing in their joints with greater freedom of movement without chronic pain. They were also contending for healing spiritually from the insidious disbelief that so often tries to creep in clandestinely and covertly like a stealthy cat. In the post-study questionnaire, they felt some physical relief had occurred in their joints and that the Lord revealed to them that this would be a gradual process. They were comforted by that revelation. They also said they received a revelation that healing and sanctification is a process. They stated that they could feel the body and blood of Christ flow through them

after receiving the Eucharist. The third source of data was the exit interview. They were very optimistic of all that happened to them. They believed their physical improvement and spiritual insights were directly related to having received the Eucharist. They stated that the daily questionnaires and daily journal prompts were very helpful to them. They stated that a shift had occurred in them regarding intercessory prayer. This was unexpected. They stated how grateful they were for this revelation. The fourth source of data was observations. They are as solid as a rock.

The numbers taken from the daily questionnaire for Participant L were confirmed by the other three sources of data that showed an ongoing stability and single-mindedness present in them. Having triangulated and coded this data, it is fair to say this project on Participant L's behalf was a worthwhile experience devoid of extremes. I am reminded here of Paul having learned contentment in all situations. This fits Participant L very well.

The third and last one will be Participant M. Participant M's daily questionnaire numbers fluctuated between 1.4 and 5.0. These numbers expressed extremes. Participant A was on the lower end, Participant L hovered in the middle area, whereas Participant M went from the lowest to the highest and back again. They fluctuated from being anxious to feeling normal, from being rested to being extremely tired, from being close to God and then feeling a distance from him. From there, things appeared to even out and move towards the positive. According to the data, their hearing from God began to improve and as a result their confidence began to soar. The second source of data extrapolated from the pre- and post-study questionnaire confirmed their roller coaster experience. They were contending for physical healing in four specific areas with each arena having an emotional component attached to it. The third source of data was the exit interview. They

accentuated the unexpected that occurred throughout this process. This, too, was a confirmation of what appeared to be a pattern of extremes. They experienced a miraculous physical healing in one area, improvement in the other areas and unprecedented freedom spiritually. The fourth source of data was observations. I could see that they were fully engaged in every Eucharist they attended by their bodily movements and prayerful demeanor. They were not distracted nor stoic.

The numbers taken from the daily questionnaire for Participant M confirmed the other three sources of data that highlighted an adventurous wild ride throughout this project. Having triangulated and coded this data, it is fair to say this project for Participant M exceeded their expectation and was a worthwhile experience.

I could certainly go through each participant but felt these three reflected a wide range within this phenomenological qualitative study. The remaining participants fall within the parameters of these three. Having said that, I would like to briefly mention two other participants who each had a unique experience: Participant D and C.

Participant D, like Participant M, had a wide range of numbers fluctuating between 1.1 and 5.0. They were contending for physical and emotional healing. The physical healing, they were contending for was an incurable illness they have had for most of their adult life. They were not healed of this malady during the project. This happened several weeks after the project. They received a revelation during the project to begin thanking the Lord for the healing instead of asking for the healing. This was a tremendous shift for them. They correlated this revelation with having received the Eucharist during the project. They had a dream they would be completely healed, and

they were within a few days! It was truly a miracle. Was this because of the Eucharist? We may never know. I found this, however, interesting, and exciting.

Participant C did not fill out the daily questionnaire so there is no data available. They did, however, fill out the pre- and post-study questionnaires and the exit interview. I mention this participant because they were in attendance to all fifty-one Eucharists. According to them, attending every Eucharist was a challenge to their flesh: "my obedience and sacrifice were an offering to the Lord." They shared the unexpected that happened for them in hearing the Word of God proclaimed three times a day as a profound contemplative experience; in addition, they declared that they had received an ever deepening and profound revelation of Christ's true presence in the Eucharist that has altered their spiritual life beyond measure. I found their commitment interesting, intriguing, and exciting. I say this because this participant only began attending COTR because of COVID 19; the church they had been attending closed its doors during the pandemic. They had never received the Eucharist and knew nothing about it. Their religious experience had been exclusively evangelical. According to them, their growth spiritually has been exponential. They continue to attend the Eucharist every single day. In all my years of priestly ministry, I have never seen anything like it.

Now that I have outlined the results of my project and shared with you some specifics about the experiences of several participants, I will turn again to my hypothesis. I will consider whether my hypothesis was verified and whether my project was a success.

I would begin by saying that I believe my hypothesis was overwhelmingly supported; that there is a correlation between the Eucharist and healing. The operative word there for me is correlation. What happened is that most of the participants had an

experience they could testify to, and many of these testimonies came from the unexpected. What happened and how it happened was unique in every circumstance.

I hypothesized that if individuals receive the Eucharist on a regular basis over a three-week period within the context of the daily and Sunday liturgical celebrations, they will then experience healing. This healing would entail a measurable change in the physical and emotional well-being of the person, which will be analyzed either through a medical diagnosis or a person's testimony of a recognizable relief. This study is looking at the correlation between the frequency of communion and healing.

There were verifiable physical healings that occurred, there were testimonies of relief from physical ailments, and there was a preponderance of emotional relief and spiritual strengthening. The data supports the conclusion that there is a correlation between receiving the Eucharist and healing. I, along with a vast majority of the participants, consider my project a success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I will discuss what went well with the project. I will then identify what things did not go well and what I would change. Finally, I will address what was unexpected and suggest where we go from here.

What Went Well

To identify what went well with the project and what didn't, I asked the participants several questions during the exit interview. I asked each of the participants "Would you change anything: times, teachings, more time for quiet reflection?" Although

one person said they would shorten the teaching times and have more time for quiet reflection, the rest said they would not change anything. This question was not referring to the teaching homilies prior to the project beginning. I gave a short reflection at every one of the fifty-one Eucharists.

I believe that the times the Eucharist was offered helped the project to go well. I would do the Eucharist again three times a day during the week, once on Saturday and once on Sunday. I had concerns that doing three Eucharists a day would be too much. This concern was unfounded. This was legitimized by personal testimonies from the participants as well as their continual attendance. In the exit interview several of the participants were grateful that they knew the Eucharist was being offered even though they were not there. It established a rhythm for many. I am convinced many Christians would like the churches to be open throughout the day. For centuries the church doors were open, and the church bells rang out seven times a day reminding the church to be praying. Because at COTR, we have a noon Eucharist, our doors are open every day for several hours throughout the day. This kind of reminiscing sounds archaic, impractical, and even dangerous, and yet churches, historically, have always been places of sanctuary.

What also went well were the teachings I did prior to the beginning of the project. What I would change is to expand them from six teaching homilies to twelve and I would have copies of the teachings available to the participants.

Before the project began and even after it was finished, I had concerns about the packets. Nothing specific, mind you, but just wondered if the participants would find them practical and useful. During the exit interview I asked, "Were the daily objective questions helpful?" Three persons did not find the daily objective questions particularly

helpful. Interestingly, however they did not think they should be done away with. The rest felt they were valuable even though many did not do them every day. With the help of my peer associate, what we discovered is that all the participants were aware of them and as a result reminded them what to be thinking about. This was an important insight. I would use them again.

I also asked each participant during the interview “Were the daily subjective journaling prompts helpful?” Every participant felt the daily journal prompts to be very helpful. They highly recommended that they remain. Again, not everyone did them but knowing they were there was a helpful reminder. I would certainly use them again.

Finally, during the exit interview I asked the participants about the last part of the packet, the confidentiality and medical waiver. I asked if they felt these waivers were sufficient and every participant reported that the forms were very adequate.

All in all, the exit interviews went very well. However, I would have liked to allow more time for those interviews. I would also ask the participants if we could record their testimonies and transcribe them. Testimonies are a powerful tool for evangelizing and stirring up faith for expecting the unexpected. This would be contingent of course on obtaining their permission. Anonymity, confidentiality, and protection from any kind of coercion must be kept as an utmost priority for each of the participants. It would be imperative to maintain the highest standards of ethical practices possible.

Returning to the use of the common cup, especially in the throes of a pandemic, was something that went unexpectedly well; it created a tangible cohesiveness that was unmistakably miraculous. This discovery touched into a deep chasm for community. This was the unexpected that happened so powerfully for Participant Y quoted in the Exit

Interviews section above. I would even venture to guess that a whole study could be undergone to examine why so many wanted to drink from the common cup: the cup of Christ's Eucharistic Presence and the cup as a visible and prophetic sign of unity and community. Though I am not yet planning to do this study, I am compelled to discuss this part of my project in detail.

The Common Cup

I have argued throughout this entire paper an apologetic that the Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. I have intimated a polemical argument that the Eucharist is neither a memorial nor a symbol but rather the Real Presence of Christ. I am acutely aware that there are many Christians who do not hold this high Christological view regarding the Eucharist. This seems to be like the cessationists argument that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer operative in the body of Christ. Both arguments appear to me to be unsustainable from Sacred Scripture and are based on a theology of negation. Furthermore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist are magnificent mysteries, so grand and sublime that only a child could grasp them. And after all, it is children who will inherit the kingdom of God.

In a liturgical church such as COTR as part of the ICCEC, the Eucharist is to be celebrated together as a community. The idea of persons doing communion on their own is a recent development. A priest is not permitted to do a private Eucharist and a congregation needs to have a priest as the celebrant at the Eucharist. The Eucharist and community go hand in hand. This position, far from hindering or diminishing the

priesthood of all believers, serves only to enhance it. This discussion, however, goes beyond the scope of the topic at hand.

In liturgical churches with a high sacramental theology, the Eucharistic host is distributed to the faithful either in the hand or on the tongue, and the Eucharistic wine is received either by drinking from the one cup or by intinction, which is when the host is dipped into the chalice.

I have celebrated the liturgy of the Eucharist by drinking from the one cup daily for over thirty-five years, with few exceptions. The priest is always the first to drink from the cup and the last. He finishes up what is left in the chalice after everyone has received.

For many churches, including liturgical churches, with the onslaught of COVID-19, many practices were altered or discontinued altogether. I was asked by my bishop to alter our service for a time regarding how we distributed the Eucharistic elements to the parishioners. Our adaptation was the use of individual tiny cups to hold the Precious Blood. We did this for a year.³⁰ It reminded me of growing up in the Baptist church where individual tiny cups or glasses were the norm.

This was very difficult for me. I was angry, frustrated, and resentful for having to do this. I went to confession on several occasions to deal with this dark night in my soul.

³⁰ Throughout the pandemic, we never closed the church. I continued the daily Eucharist at noon, Monday through Friday, and the Sunday morning service as well. We took the necessary precautions to keep everyone safe who was in attendance by implementing proper social distancing, masks, and hand sanitizers. Parishioners as well as people in the community continued to regularly attend our services. We like so many other churches, had parishioners who did not attend, in some cases for up to a year, and others who have still not returned, either because of personal choice or by the request of their families. We did however offer anyone who wanted the Eucharist to contact us, and we would bring it to them. We presently have eight persons we will bring the Eucharist to, when they request it. We do not live stream our services. We only record the Sunday morning service up through the homily and then make this available through our website. Our reasoning has always been to have people attend to receive the Eucharist: preaching and worship can be done technologically, but the Eucharist cannot. (Spiritual communion is not apropos here.)

But as a priest, I am not a maverick. I take a vow of obedience to my bishop, who I have a deep love and respect for. I shared with him my struggle because it is imperative that we bring all things into the light. At times I felt I was compromising on what I knew to be true. I have had some profound prophetic intercessors around me that kept assuring me to trust that the Lord was in all of this. I am not proud to share this struggle. I worked very hard at not revealing my struggle with the parishioners.

As we got closer to the launching of the project, I believed I was to approach the bishop about returning to using the common cup at the Eucharist. In my conversation with him, he not only gave me permission to return to using the common cup, but to tell the congregation that he was in full support of us doing so. I was grateful and humbled and thankful at how patient God the Father can be with each of us in our pity parties.

As I prepared to tell the parishioners of COTR that we were returning to the use of the common cup, I suddenly wondered if they would want to return drinking from the one cup. I honestly was not sure what their reaction would be as we were still dealing with COVID 19 amidst the anxiety and outright fear of this virus, medical warnings, governmental protocols, and bold proclamations of who was essential and who was not. I had wondered if most of the parishioners would prefer to keep using the individual cups. After all it seemed safer, neater, cleaner, and in line with all the prescribed safety regulations.

I was shocked by their response. They wanted the common cup back. They were very grateful and celebrated that we could, again, all drink from the one cup. As several of the prophetic intercessors told me, a hunger and longing had been birthed within the

hearts of the people for the oneness that the common cup beckons us into. It became a watershed for the whole community.

I do not truly know if the six teaching homilies given before the project began helped in this, but what I do know is that when we went back to the common cup there was a palatable shift in the atmosphere at COTR. Was it the tradition of the common cup, was it familiarity, or was it something far deeper: a sense of family, or maybe intimacy found in Christ present in the Eucharist, or maybe all of them?

This was a major event for the parishioners of COTR that greatly impacted the implementation of my project in a very positive way. It is important to understand how counter intuitive it is to have everyone drink from the same cup. I would say this even without a pandemic. There is a tangible intimacy observed when we eat and drink together so intimately, especially in a multi-racial church amidst the ubiquitous divisiveness on so many levels in our nation that appears to even eclipse the COVID 19 pandemic. (I address the issue of intimacy throughout this paper, but I would again refer you to chapter three and chapter four.)

In chapter three is where I chronicled Catherine's experience with the Bubonic Plague. And it is noteworthy that there are no recorded cases of anyone ever getting sick from receiving the Eucharist during that most egregious and unsufferable pandemic.³¹

³¹ In the face of pandemics, the church must not hide. Catherine of Siena did not hide with the onslaught of the Black Death, also known as the Bubonic Plague. Rodney Stark in his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, pages 76-88 chronicles two pandemics that devastated the Roman Empire in the first three centuries after Christ's death and resurrection that killed an estimated five thousand people a day. Dave Gibbons in his book, *The Monkey and the Fish*, pages 99-100 commented on Stark's work by reminding us of what the Christians did in the face of those crises that no one else would do: they stayed, they helped, and many gave their lives doing so. We are all called to engage in an adventurous and dangerous mission of cooperating with the Lord Jesus in furthering the Kingdom. Hiding is not an option.

What Did Not Go Well

It was a bit chaotic gathering the information from the participants at the end of the project. Constructing a more efficient retrieval plan would be needed. Collecting all the data took almost three weeks. That process can and should be done better.

Although this is something I could not change, the weather proved to be a hindrance. On three different occasions we had adverse weather conditions with an unprecedented number of tornadoes touching down in our area. The weather reports said that the intensity of this type of inclement weather had not occurred before. This affected the three Wednesday evening services with less participants attending the Eucharist.

What I would do better would be in the teaching area. I realized that a lot of the participants have knowledge of their faith and scriptures but do not understand how the themes fit together. Another way to say that would be they have the data, but they don't get or see the pattern(s). I would need to stress this much more next time.

Another thing that I would do better is spend more time explaining the importance of the daily assessment and journal prompts, specifically in conjunction with Dr. Caroline Leaf's study on neuroplasticity, Leanne Payne's instructions on journal writing, and St. Ignatius of Loyola's daily examen prayer. I would also explain the importance of ex opera operantis and lex credendi lex orandi, and the three powers of the soul: memory, understanding, and will.

Lastly, what was unexpected was the impact of COVID 19. Like so many churches, we have parishioners who have still not returned primarily because of COVID 19. This is due to at least the three following reasons: (1) they are afraid to; (2) their families do not want them to; (3) they can now attend virtual church from the comfort of

their own homes. There may be a myriad of other reasons, but these three are true. What I have seen that was unexpected was the commitment from the parishioners who showed up despite the pandemic. They want to be at church. They want to be in community. They want to worship together. They want to have fellowship. They want to drink from the common cup. They want to receive the Eucharist.

With that, I conclude with the words of Jesus, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in Him.” And everyone said. Amen.

APPENDIX A

PACKET

Dear Participants,

IMPORTANT NOTE: This study is not a substitute for medical care. Follow all guidelines set by your medical provider. DO NOT stop any medical treatment without the direct instruction of your medical provider. DO NOT refuse changes in your medical treatments or surgeries prescribed by your medical provider.

For the safety of all participants, the packets will not have your names on them, but will only have participants' numbers on them. This way you can be assured that no one will know which answers belong to which participants.

It is important that all your answers are honest and true. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, nor any "good" or "bad" answers. The results of this study will not reflect "well" or "poorly" on you or on the conductor of the study. So, please only report what is true, to the best of your abilities.

The following study packet contains three parts: 1) The first is a pre-study questionnaire used to determine the starting place, goals, and expectations of the participants. 2) The second is a daily journal you are to fill out each of the 21 days of the study, regardless of whether or not you take Eucharist that day. This contains a subjective short-answer section, which is meant to inspire personal reflection about your day's events, and a short daily questionnaire. You will not turn in the page of short-answer questions at the end of the study, but these questions may be helpful in remembering important points throughout the study that you may want to discuss during your exit interview. You will turn in your daily questionnaires (blue edge) at the end of the study, along with the pre- and post-study questionnaires. These will be used to establish the day-to-day data required for the study. 3) The third part is the post-study questionnaire, which will be used to determine what progress you made toward your goals, if any, and to mark any expected or unexpected experiences that you may have had.

There is an exit interview, which is simply a time for participants to meet one-on-one with the conductor of the study, Fr. Mark Finley, to discuss the highlights and lowlights of your experiences related to the study, or anything that may be outside of the scope of the questionnaires that you want to discuss.

Finally, it is important that you continue to do those things that are normal in your everyday life throughout the study. This includes, but is not limited to: prayer/ meditation, reading/ studying the Bible, fasting, receiving prayer, participating in confession, etc. Especially, DO NOT stop medical treatment (whether medication, diet, exercise, etc.) without the direct instruction of your medical provider. DO NOT refuse changes in medical treatments or surgeries prescribed by your medical provider. It is encouraged that you begin thinking about the daily short answer questions every night leading up to the study.

Thank you for participating in this study.
Sincerely,

Fr. Mark Finley

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Turn this in at the beginning of the study

Summary of Study:

“Healing through the Eucharist” (hereinafter HTE) involves a 3-week study of the effect of certain practices on physical, spiritual and emotional health. As part of this study, participants engage, among other things, in keeping a journal of their reception of the Eucharist and any change in their medical, physical, spiritual or emotional health. Where practical, this includes objective measurements through medical testing, such as blood pressure readings, blood glucose levels, or other vital signs. This objective testing is not provided by Fr. Finley, but by the participant or the participant’s own physician.

Medical Agreement:

HTE is a study forming the basis of Fr. Mark Finley’s Doctor of Ministry dissertation. I acknowledge that I, as all participants, have been personally in face to face meetings informed by Fr. Finley that this is not a medical research study, and I have been advised to follow my physician’s orders and regime of treatment, if any, during this study as at all other times. I agree that in no event will I discontinue any treatment, medications, or medical supervision, if any, on the sole basis of this study and the thesis that healing occurs through the Eucharist.

Confidentiality:

I understand that my journal, my comments in interviews, and any health information I may provide will be confidential, and will not be revealed as part of this study without my consent and execution of a valid HIPAA authorization.

Release, Waiver of

Liability & Indemnity:

I understand the hazards and possible consequences of not complying with the above Medical Agreement. I agree to release and hold Fr. Mark Finley harmless for and from any and all claims, demands, suits for damages from any injury or complications, or otherwise, including, but not limited to, mental, emotional or physical injuries or complications that might result from participating in the HTE Study, including but not limited to, non-compliance with the Medical Agreement.

State of Alabama)

Jefferson County)

I, _____, being of sound mind and above the age of 18 years, have read and understood this Consent to Participate in the HTE Research Study, and having had my questions, if any, answered to my satisfaction, acknowledge and agree to the above terms of participation.

Given under my hand and seal, this the _____ day of _____, 2021.

Signed: _____

Pre-Study Questionnaire

Turn this in at the beginning of the study.

1. I (have / have not) participated in a Eucharist expecting to receive a healing.

2. If yes, I experienced the following results:

3. What type of healing am I desiring?. (Physical, Emotional, Spiritual)
Be as specific as possible.

4. What would I consider a successful result? (goal) _____

5. How confident am I that I will receive a healing? _____

6. Would I consider it success if I were healed in a way other than I was expecting?

(Yes/No) _____

Participant #40

PRE-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE—Turn this in at beginning of study**Pre-Study Questionnaire**
Turn this in at the beginning of the study.

7. What is my current health condition? (today)

a. Physically

b. Emotionally

c. Spiritually

8. What is my attitude about this study? _____

9. What does faith mean to me, and how has my faith impacted my life so far?

10. What TYPICAL actions do you do daily

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist | <input type="checkbox"/> Fasting | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer & Meditation | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Dieting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read / Study Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Confession | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Participant #40

Personal Journal Day 1 – Thursday March 11, 2021

Keep this for your records

Assessment - What actions did I do today

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist | <input type="checkbox"/> Fasting | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer & Meditation | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Dieting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read / Study Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Confession | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

1. How am I doing? _____

2. What was my biggest struggle today? _____

3. What was my favorite moment today? _____

4. Did I encounter God today? If so where, how, when, what did the Lord say? _____

Participant #40

PERSONAL JOURNAL—Keep for your records

PERSONAL JOURNAL— Keep for your records**Personal Journal Day 1 – Thursday March 11, 2021***Keep this for your records*

5. What healing(s) am I asking the Lord for? _____

6. Has God shown me anything about what I am contending for? _____

7. Has the healing I am contending for changed? _____

8. Have I received healing in other areas that I was not expecting? What? _____

9. Is there anything else I want to note about my day? _____

Participant #40

Daily Questionnaire - Day 1 – Thursday March 11, 2021

Turn this in at the end of the study.

Assessment - What actions did I do today

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist | <input type="checkbox"/> Fasting | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer & Meditation | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Dieting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read / Study Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Confession | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

I am feeling	Anxious <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Normal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Peaceful <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
I am feeling	Tired <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Normal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Rested <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
I felt close to God	Distant <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Normal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Close <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
I have heard from God	Silent <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Quiet <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Clear <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
My healing is getting	Worse <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	No Change <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Healed <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
I feel the Primary reason for my healing is	No Healing <input type="checkbox"/>	Medical <input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer - Confession <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Diet - Exercise <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Eucharist <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
To what degree do I feel Eucharist is the primary reason for my healing	Not At All <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Confident <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
My faith in Eucharist healing is	Doubtful <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Hopeful <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Confident <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
This experience is	Discouraging <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	No Change <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Encouraging <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
My healing goal has changed	No Change <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Modified <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Changed <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
My healing expectations are	No Change <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Modified <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Open <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

Participant #40

Post-Study Questionnaire

Turn this in at the end of the study.

1. I am (glad / not glad) that I participated in Eucharist expecting to receive a healing.

2. How were my expectations met / not met? _____

3. Describe the type of healing I was desiring. (Physical, Emotional, Spiritual....)
Be as specific as possible. Include changes in healing desired if there are any.

4. Did I get a successful result? (goal) _____

5. How confident am I that a future Eucharist will bring healing? _____

6. Was I healed in a way other than I was expected? (Yes/No) _____ If so please explain.

7. I (do / do not) consider Eucharistic healing a success?

Participant #40

POST-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE – Turn this in at end of study

Post-Study Questionnaire

Turn this in at the end of the study.

8. What is my current condition? (today)

- a. Physically _____

- b. Emotionally _____

- c. Spiritually _____

9. My attitude about this study is ... _____

10. What results, if any, did I experience that I was not expecting? _____

Participant #40

APPENDIX B

LITURGY

ORDER OF SERVICE
Easter
Liturgy of the Word

Processional

The celebrant and assisting ministers enter during a song (or in silence).
 Order: Thurifer, Crucifer, (Assisting Ministers), Deacon, Celebrant.
 All reverence the altar (the celebrant approaches it and kisses it).
 The altar may be incensed at this time.

All stand.

Priest:  Alleluia. Christ is risen!

All: The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Collect for Purity

Priest: Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open,
 all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid;
 cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
 by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
 that we may perfectly love you,
 and worthily magnify your holy Name;
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Summation of the Law

The Deacon or other person appointed says:

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. [Matthew 22:37-40]

Confession of Sin

The Deacon or other person appointed says:

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Or

As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of Christ's love,
let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for pardon and strength.

All: Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed, by what I have done and by what I have left undone. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I am truly sorry and I humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy one me and forgive me; that I may delight in Your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

The priest prays the absolution.

Priest: The Almighty and merciful Lord +
grant you absolution and remission of all your sins,
true repentance, amendment of life,
and the grace and consolation of His Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to God

The following is said or sung:

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For You alone and the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect of the Day

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

The Priest says the Collect.

7th Sunday of Easter

Priest: Let us pray.

O God, *and Father*, the King of glory,
 You have exalted Your only Son Jesus Christ
 with great triumph to Your kingdom in heaven:
 Do not leave us comfortless,
 but send Your Holy Spirit to strengthen us,
 and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before;
 who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, in glory everlasting.

All: Amen.

The Readings

All sit.

The Readings are proclaimed. A Reading from _____.

After the Reading, the readers says: **Reader:** The word of the Lord. **All:** Thanks be to God.

All stand while the Psalm is read.

After the Psalm, the **Gloria Patri** is said or sung.

All sit for the second reading.

Gradual Hymn

All stand.

Gospel

The Deacon or Priest proclaims the Gospel saying:

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____. All: Glory to You, O Lord.

After the Gospel, the Deacon or Priest says: The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise and Adoration

This may take place at other times as well: e.g., after the Gloria, before or after the homily.

Songs are in the song book.

The Sermon

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of
His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very
God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom
all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down
from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and
was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to
the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the
Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and
the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds
from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and
glorified; who spake by the Prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge
one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the
dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Or,

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Peace

Priest: The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us offer one another a sign of God's peace.

Offertory**Announcements****Preparation of the Gifts**

The priest, standing at the altar, takes the paten with the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, says:

Blessed are You, Lord God of all creation. For through Your goodness we have received the bread we offer You: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become the Body of Christ.

All: Blessed be God forever.

While pouring a small amount of water into the chalice(s), the priest says quietly:

(By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity.)

Then the priest takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, says:

Blessed are You, Lord of all creation. For through Your goodness we received the wine we offer You, fruit of the vine and work of human hands; it will become the Blood of Christ.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Then the priest takes the offering baskets, and, holding them slightly raised above the altar, says:

Blessed are You, Lord of all creation. Through Your goodness we bring these tithes and offerings before You. They will be used in Your church for the work You have set before us and the furthering of Your kingdom.

The Great Thanksgiving

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

The Priest continues with the Eucharistic Prayer.

Preface for Easter

Priest: Father, it is our duty and our salvation
always and everywhere to give You thanks
through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But chiefly are we bound to praise You
for the glorious resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
for He is the true Paschal Lamb,
who was sacrificed for us,
and has taken away the sin of the world.
By His death He has destroyed death,
and by His rising to life again
He has won for us everlasting life.

Therefore we praise You,
joining our voices with Angels and Archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
who for ever sing this hymn
to proclaim the glory of Your name:

Sanctus

If recited, say the following: If sung, please see Sanctus in the song portion of this book.

All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord;
God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Eucharistic Prayer**Lord, You are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness.**

The priest joins his hands and holding them outstretched over the offerings, says:
Let Your Holy Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy,

The priest joins his hands and then makes the sign of the cross once over both bread and chalice, and says:
**so that they may become the +
 Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The priest joins his hands

The words of the Lord in the following formulas should be spoken clearly and distinctly, as their meaning demands.

**Before He was given up to death,
 a death He freely accepted,
 He took bread and gave You thanks.
 He broke the bread,
 gave it to His disciples, and said,**

Take, eat: This is My Body, which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of Me.

The priest shows the consecrated host to the people,
 places it on the paten, and bows in adoration.
 Then the priest continues:

**When supper was ended,
 He took the cup.
 Again He gave You thanks and praise,
 gave the cup to His disciples, and said:**

Drink this, all of you:

**This is My Blood of the New Covenant,
 which is shed for you and for the whole world,
 for the forgiveness of sins,
 for the healing of fallen and broken humanity.
 Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of Me.**

The priest shows the consecrated chalice to the people,
 places it on the corporal, and bows in adoration.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Then the priest sings or says

Christ has died,

Christ is risen,

Christ will come again.

Then with hands extended, the priest says:

In memory of His death and resurrection, we offer You, Father,
this life-giving bread, this saving cup. We thank You for counting us worthy
to stand in Your presence and serve You. May all of us who share in the
Body and Blood of Jesus be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.

Lord, remember Your Church throughout the world;
make us grow in love, together with our Patriarch, N. _____,
our Bishop, N. _____, and all the clergy.

Remember those for whom we now pray _____.

The priest prays for them briefly with hands joined.

Then with hands extended, the priest continues:

Draw our hearts to remember the poor and broken.
As we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus,
may we be transformed to become the Body of Christ to the world.

Have mercy on us all, oh Lord,
for You have made us worthy to share eternal life with all the saints.
May we praise You in union with them and give You glory,

The priest joins his hands
through Your Son, Jesus Christ.

The priest takes the chalice and the host, and lifting them up, says:

By Him, with Him, and in Him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is Yours,
almighty Father, forever and ever.

The people respond:
Amen.

The priest continues:

Priest: And now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray...

All say together:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 forever and ever. Amen.

The Fraction

The priest breaks the consecrated host in half, then breaks a small pries and places it in the chalice.

Priest: [Alleluia!] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us!

All: Therefore, let us keep the feast! [Alleluia!]

If the Agnus Dei is not sung, then the priest may continue by saying:

Priest: Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

All: Have mercy on us.

Priest: Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

All: Have mercy on us.

Priest: Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

All: Grant us Your peace.

The priest elevates the host and chalice together, saying:

Priest: Behold God's love for you!

Behold the Lamb of God
 who takes away the sins of the world.
 Blessed are those who are called
 to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

All: Lord we praise You, that in these holy gifts,
 there is healing for body, soul and spirit.

Though I'm not worthy to receive You,
 only say the word and I shall be healed.

Closing Prayers**After Communion the priest says:****Priest:** Let us pray.

All: Eternal God, heavenly Father,
 You have graciously accepted us as living members
 of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ,
 and You have fed us with spiritual food
 in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.
 Send us now into the world in peace
 and grant us strength and courage to love and serve You
 with gladness and singleness of heart;
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessings**Making the sign of the cross over the congregation, the priest says:**

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and
 minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our
 Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty + the Father and the Son and the
 Holy Spirit be with you for always. Amen.

Or

Remember the poor. Be kindly affectionate one to another.
 And may the watchful care of + the Father, the quiet confidence of the Son,
 and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with you and with those you
 love and care for now and forever. Amen.

Or

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.
 May His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Amen.
 May He look upon you with kindness, and give You His peace. Amen.
 May Almighty God bless you,
 the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Or

May Almighty God bless you, + the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 Amen.

Dismissals

The Deacon dismisses the people with these words:

(Alleluia, Alleluia is added at the beginning during Easter until Pentecost Sunday.)

Deacon: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Or

Deacon: Go forth in the Name of Christ.

Or

Deacon: Go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Or

Deacon: Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

Or

Deacon: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Alleluia, Alleluia is added at the beginning during Easter until Pentecost Sunday.)

Pentecost

The priest continues the preface with hands extended:
Father, all powerful and everliving God, we do well always and
everywhere to give You thanks.

Today You sent the Holy Spirit on those marked out to be Your
children by sharing the life of Your Son, and so You brought the
paschal mystery to completion.

Today we celebrate the great beginning of Your church when the Holy
Spirit made known to all peoples the one true God, and created from
the many languages of man one voice to profess one faith.
Today You poured out the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and
filled Your church with the blessings of the Spirit that we might
continue to preach, teach, heal, cast out demons, and proclaim the
good news of Your Kingdom.

Therefore we praise You, joining our voices with angels,
archangels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and the whole
company of heaven in their unending hymn of praise:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

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